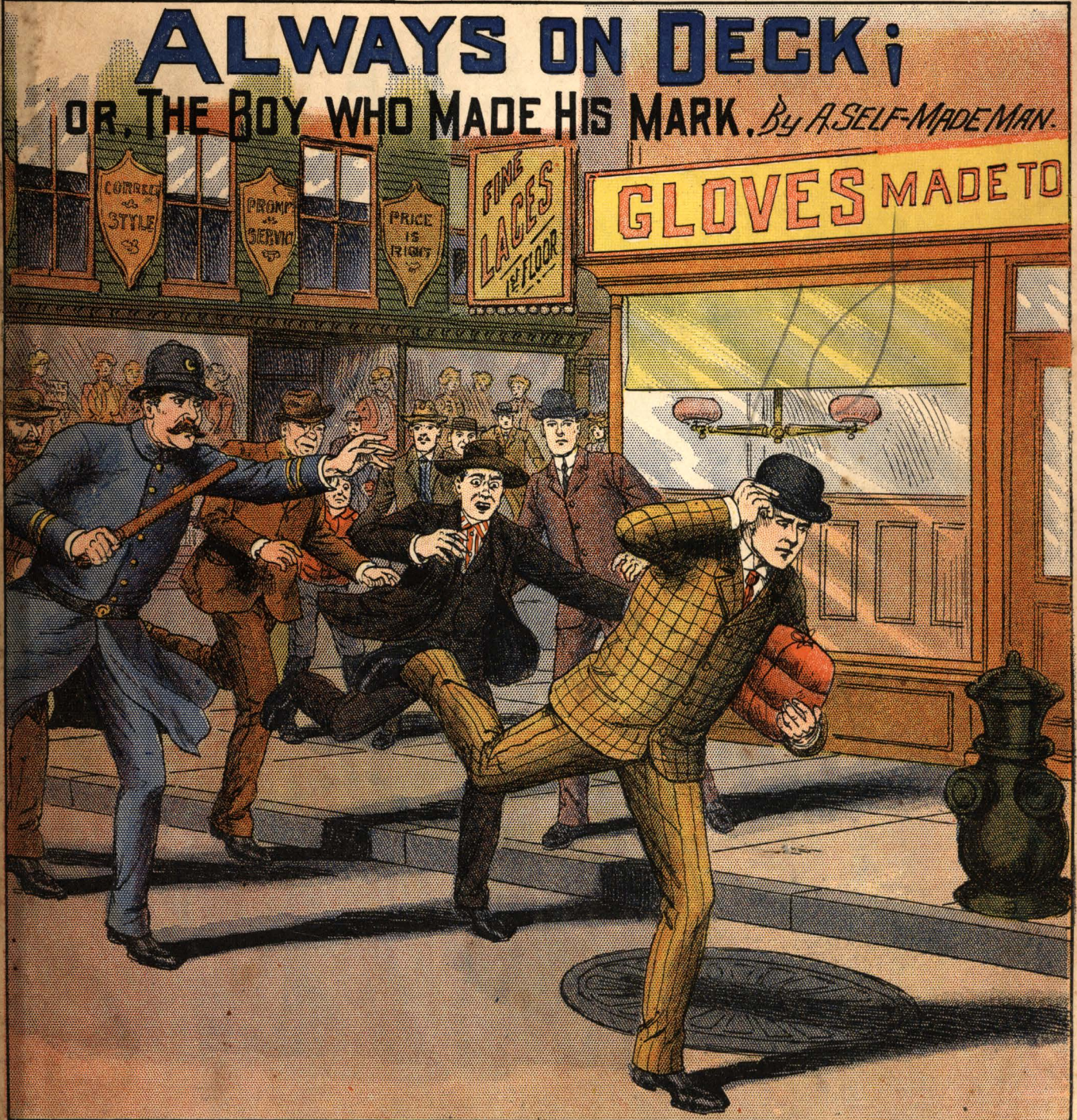


No 48

5 Cents.

FAME AND FORTUNE

STORIES OF BOYS WEEKLY WHO MAKE MONEY.



"Stop thief!" roared Danny Mack again and again, as he led the crowd that followed close on the boy's heels. A policeman standing on the corner joined in the chase. It was a strenuous moment for Tom Sherwood.

Fame and Fortune Weekly

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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ALWAYS ON DECK

OR,

THE BOY WHO MADE HIS MARK

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.

SHERWOOD'S INVINCIBLE LUSTERINE.

"What are you doing, Tom?" asked Sam Wiley, Tom Sherwood's particular chum, one Saturday afternoon, after knocking at the door of his friend's "sanctum sanctorum," as Tom called it, on the second floor of the Sherwood carriage-house, and gaining admittance upon uttering some password which had been arranged between the two boys.

"Making furniture polish," replied Tom, serenely, returning to a copper kettle which stood upon a small gas-stove in a sunny corner of the unfinished room, and recommencing the stirring of the amber-colored mixture it contained.

"Furniture polish!" exclaimed his friend, looking into the kettle with some interest.

"Exactly. I am manufacturing Sherwood's Invincible Lusterine—the best polish for making old furniture look like new on this or any other market."

"You don't say," grinned Sam.

"I do say it. This polish hasn't its equal on the face of the globe."

"How do you know it hasn't?"

"How do I know it? Do you see those bottles on that shelf?"

"Sure I see them. What's in 'em?"

"Furniture polish," replied Tom, emphatically. "Look at the labels."

"In all those bottles?"

"Yes, in all those bottles. There's a sample on that shelf of every wood polish I know of on the American market, whether domestic or imported."

"What do you want with 'em?"

"I use them for comparison of results."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Look at that dilapidated chair behind you."

Sam wheeled about.

"I'm looking."

"Each of the legs, sides, and the back is coated with a different kind of polish. The next chair to it is also treated in the same way. The third likewise. In all there are twenty-seven different varieties of furniture polish used on those three chairs. Some parts of the chairs look better than other parts, an evidence of the superiority of several of the preparations over the others. Most of them, however, are about on a par. You will notice that every sample has a number painted on it."

"That's right," observed Sam. "What's that for?"

"To identify it. A duplicate number is pasted on a corresponding bottle on the shelf. Now look at those three chairs carefully and tell me which section shows the best results in the way of polish."

Sam Wiley looked the chairs over, one after the other, and after some considerable cogitation finally decided upon three samples as showing the best results; but he could not pick one of three as being better than the other.

"You've a good eye, Sam," said Tom, when his chum announced his decision. "The three samples you picked out

are the best. One is made by Jenkins & Co., of Boston; the second by Brown & Cooley, of Cincinnati, and the third is the production of the famous German furniture house of Waldteifel, Bache & Zeil, of Frankfort-on-the-Main."

"You've got the furniture polish business down fine, haven't you?" grinned Sam.

"I've only named three out of the twenty-seven varieties I have on the shelf. That little crooked-looking bottle at the end of the row came all the way from Calcutta, in India. It's a very good polish for certain kinds of wood, but what I have been experimenting upon is an universal wood polisher. That's what Sherwood's Invincible Lusterine is. Compared with my article the Calcutta product isn't in it, the Boston, Cincinnati, and German polishes take a back seat, while the other twenty-three look like thirty cents beside it."

"Your preparation must be something wonderful!" snickered Sam.

"You can just bank on it that it is," replied Tom, confidently.

"The proof of the pudding is in the eating," chuckled his chum. "Let me see some evidence of the goods."

"I'll let you see a dozen. One ought to do, though, for the superiority of my polish over all the others is apparent at a glance."

"Let me see if it is. It's a good one if it beats either of the three I selected."

"It lays away over them. Look at that small rocker standing by the window. I guess it's dry enough for you to handle. It's had two coats of my polish, just as those twenty-seven sections of the three chairs had two coats each of its particular polish. Now, Sam, tell me what you think of it as a disinterested critic."

Sam went over and looked at the rocker.

"Gee whiz! Is that your polish?" he asked, with wonder in his eyes.

"That's my polish—Sherwood's Invincible Lusterine. Don't forget the name, please. How will it look on the billboards, in the street cars, and the newspapers?"

"Say, this is the finest ever," exclaimed Sam, enthusiastically.

"Of course it is."

"And you invented this polish?"

"Sure thing."

"What's it made of? I want to make some myself, and astonish the furniture in our parlor."

"That's my secret, Sam. As it isn't patented yet, it wouldn't be just the thing to give it away. The ingredients are all the ordinary things that go to make the regulation furniture polish, with one exception. That exception is what gives it that remarkable lustre. That iridescent glow, as it were."

"Say that again, will you, Tom?" snickered Sam. "Iri—what?"

"Iridescent—having tints like the rainbow. Hold that rocker up in the sunlight."

Sam did so.

"Jumping Juggernauts! It looks almost like glass, and the finest glass I ever saw, with all the colors of the——"

"Rainbow—just what I said, didn't I?"

"This is the most remarkable polish that ever was made."

"Of course it is, or I wouldn't be wasting my valuable time upon it. It's a comer for fair. I expect to make my fortune with it."

"You do?"

"I do. And I wish you were in it with me."

"What's to hinder me?"

"Nothing, if you've got the gumption to take hold and stick to it—that is, provided your mother will let you do it. I'm going into the polish business on the work-and-win basis, see? As I haven't any funds at present to advertise the article, and bring it to the attention of the great American public in that way, why, it's up to me to introduce it by my individual exertions."

"Going to canvass the town?"

"Yes. I shall practice on this burgh. Then, after I have temporarily exhausted my native heath I'm going to travel."

"Going to what?" asked Sam, in astonishment.

"Travel. Do you want me to spell the word for you?"

"No, of course not; but what will your folks say?"

"My folks!"

A cloud came over Tom's brow.

The atmosphere of his home was not a congenial one to him.

Tom often told himself that his father and mother, while good people, as the world goes, were not like other boys' fathers and mothers.

There was not that familiarity between him and his parents that he saw between other boys and their parents.

There was a great difference, too, in his mother's treatment of him and his half-brother, Henry—for the present Mrs. Sherwood was Tom's stepmother, having married Mr. Sherwood a year after Tom's real mother died when Tom was only a year old.

Although Henry was the younger branch of the family by nearly two years, he came in for all the good things dispensed by either Mr. or Mrs. Sherwood.

As for Tom, he got the short end of everything, from parental affection down to most ordinary privileges.

Is it astounding that Henry should notice how much more important he appeared to be in the family, and feel inclined to rub it into Tom?

It was probably because Tom looked very like his dead mother, and had the best traits of her strong and self-reliant nature ingrafted in him, that the present Mrs. Sherwood treated him so coolly; and as his stepmother ruled the house, and moulded her husband's opinions, Mr. Sherwood fell into line and handled his first-born very often without gloves, while he lavished what affection was in him on Henry.

It was a long time before Tom discovered the true relationship between himself and the lady he had all along supposed to be his natural mother.

When the truth came to him, which it did one day by accident, he was not only greatly astonished and disturbed, but a good many things which hitherto he had not been able to understand became perfectly clear to him.

Mr. and Mrs. Sherwood were prominent members of their church; held a good social position, and were, as might be expected, well-to-do people.

The town in which they lived was called Englewood, and their rather pretentious residence stood facing one of the principal residential streets.

Mr. Sherwood kept three carriage horses, and a Shetland pony especially for Henry's use.

He had a family carriage and a basket phaeton for Mrs. Sherwood.

Consequently he had to have a man to look out for the horses and the two vehicles, and this so-called coachman also performed the duties of gardener, and he even acted as a butler when the Sherwoods gave a dinner party.

The horses were kept on one side of the carriage-house, the vehicles on the other.

The stairway to the upper region divided the two sections.

The coachman slept in a room over the carriage end, while Tom had appropriated, after a good deal of diplomatic work, the unfinished room on the other side.

If Henry had wanted the use of it himself he would have had no trouble in getting it, but fortunately for Tom his tastes were not in the direction of the carriage-house, and so the neglected lad was permitted to establish his headquarters there and remain unmolested.

No member of the family inquired particularly into what he did there, though it was known he spent the greater part of his time there when not at school or engaged in out-of-door sports.

He never volunteered any information on the subject himself, and always kept the door locked when he was away, and sometimes when he was inside.

The only outsider who got more than an occasional peep into his sanctum was his chum, Sam Wiley.

These two were almost inseparable, and they had few secrets from each other.

Their tastes were rather similar, but as for brightness, energy, and ambition, Sam wasn't one two three with Tom.

Tom was of an ingenious turn of mind.

He was never idle in the solitude of his sanctum, but was "always up to something," either practically or theoretically—that is, he was either putting some idea of his brain into tangible shape, or he was scheming out the idea.

A few months before the opening of our story Mrs. Sherwood became dissatisfied with the general appearance of the furniture in the house.

In her opinion it was taking on a dull and commonplace look, and so she decided it ought to be polished up.

She bought a bottle of a well-known polish, and set the maid to fill in an hour or so a day at the work.

Tom and the maid were on first-class terms, and the boy often stopped to chat with her.

The polishing process rather interested him, and he tried his hand at a chair or two.

On one of these occasions he accidentally spilled over the leg of one of the chairs a certain preparation he had just purchased at a paint store, and he hastily rubbed it off with the rag he had been using to apply the polish.

The result was that the combination of the preparation and the polish produced a remarkably lustrous effect, that made the rest of the polished wood look like thirty cents.

Tom at first was puzzled by the outcome, and he tried to wipe it out, but the more he wiped the more brilliant, if anything, the chair leg became.

He stopped and thought the matter over.

As it was one of the back legs of the chair, he judged that it would not easily be noticed, so he decided to repeat the experiment on the other leg, and thus make the two uniform.

Combining the two preparations once more he found the result was the same.

That evening when thinking the matter over he got a grand idea—he would see if he could make a new polish that would have every other polish on the market skinned to death.

The first thing he did was to study up the recipes for making the general run of furniture polish.

Then he got some practical instructions from a man in a furniture store who made the polish used by the establishment.

Then he started in to buy a small bottle of every furniture polish on the market, and succeeded in getting hold of twenty-seven varieties.

He now manufactured a sample of his own unique polish, and the results far exceeded what he had accidentally produced on the back legs of the parlor chair.

In fact, it actually produced a preparation that put the best French lustre in the shade.

CHAPTER II.

THE PARTNERSHIP.

"My folks!" repeated Tom, gloomily. "Oh, I guess it wouldn't worry them much if I went off awhile on a jaunt. They've got Henry, and he seems to be about the whole thing around the house. I'm not in it even a little bit."

Sam made no reply to this, and his face assumed a rather somber cast, too.

He knew how things were with his chum.

Tom had long since made him his confidant on the subject, and he felt sorry for his friend.

Sam had lost his own father at an early age, but he had a mother who thought the world of him, as most mothers do of an only son, and showed it in every way.

Tom imagined that his parents wouldn't care whether he went away or not, but in this he was mistaken.

The fact that Henry was the apple of their eyes did not mean that they had no interest at all in Tom.

But it was the utter lack of sympathy between them and the boy which gave Tom the impression that he was a mere cipher in the house.

"Now that you have finished at the High School I thought your father intended to send you to the Dunwoodie Academy?" said Sam, regarding his chum thoughtfully.

"So he does."

"Why don't you go? I wish I had your chance."

"Because I'd sooner go into the furniture polish business."

"But you could let that wait till you finished at the academy."

"I could, but I'm not going to."

"I think you're foolish."

"You've a right to your opinion," replied Tom, shortly.

"Don't get mad, old chap," said Sam. "But you're young yet, and there is lots of time to get into business. Now is the time to get all the education you can while you have got the chance."

"That's all right, Sam. But I'm satisfied father's idea in sending me to the Dunwoodie Academy is merely for the sake of appearances. It wouldn't look well for people of our social standing to put their eldest son to work in a store or an office too soon."

"I guess you're right about that," replied Sam, nodding his head. "According to that, then, I don't see how you'll be able to take up your furniture polish business until after you've been through the academy. Your father wouldn't allow you to do so."

"I'm not going to consult him about the matter at all. I'm just going to go ahead with the thing during vacation. By the time he's ready to talk school I expect to be in shape to talk business."

"Oh, I see. And then, if he refuses to let you continue——"

"We'll talk about that another time. I never cross a bridge before I come to it."

"You said something about taking me in with you if I'd stick and my mother would let me, didn't you?"

"That's right. I want somebody I can trust to make the polish while I devote my energies to introducing it."

"You can trust me all right."

"I know I can; that's why I would like to have you with me. Besides, I am sure there is a fortune in this thing, and I would rather put you in the way of making good money than take in a stranger."

"I'm much obliged to you, Tom," replied Sam.

"You're welcome. You've always stuck by me in the past, and I'm going to stick by you in the future if you'll let me."

"I'll let you, don't you worry about that," answered his chum, confidently.

"The only trouble is now that you've finished your

schooling your mother probably expects you to go to work and bring in the money right away."

"Not until after vacation, Tom. Mother wants me to have a good time for the next two months, so that I'll be in good trim to buckle down to the real thing afterward."

"Your mother is all right, Sam."

"Bet your life she is," replied his friend, emphatically.

"A boy's best friend should be his mother," said Tom, solemnly. "Your mother fills the bill, because she is your real mother. I wish I could say as much for my step-mother, but I can't. Now, look here, Sam, I'll make you a proposition. Come in this thing with me for the two months' vacation. We'll go halves in the profits, if there are any. I'll do my best to work the polish up. It ought to be a winner, don't you think?"

"Sure it ought. It should sell on sight."

"It ought to sell after a practical demonstration of its merits."

"Well, I should say. Why, that polish," continued Sam, gazing admiringly at the rocker, "has every other polish—French, German, Russian, Hindoo, and American—just skinned to death. Why, that \$2 rocker, with your polish on it, looks like a \$75 piece of furniture. You want to tell people it will make a \$50 set of furniture look like a \$500 set, especially when the sun shines on it, or the gas or electric light brings out its iridescent qualities, as you call it," with a grin.

"I see you are beginning to appreciate Sherwood's Invincible Lusterine," said Tom, with a laugh. "I'm going to give you some to take home, so that your mother can see what you're going into."

"All right. Our parlor set does look rather seedy, but I'll bet after I get a couple of coats of your Lusterine on it mother won't know it."

"Now let us continue our business talk. I want you to help me out for the next two months. Mother and Henry are going to the mountains. I'm not expected to accompany them, so I'll have eight or ten weeks' full swing to myself. By the end of that time I hope to have made enough of a market for the Lusterine to demonstrate its future possibilities. If by that time I have put you in the way of making from ten dollars a week upward, I guess your mother will be satisfied to let you keep right on."

"Well, I should remark. Ten dollars! Why, she does not expect me to earn more than \$5 at the start."

"By that time I will have canvassed Englewood and all the nearby towns. Then if we are successful I'll put it up to father. I'll show him facts and figures. If he balks then, and insists that I give it up and go to Dunwoodie, why—however, as I said before, I won't anticipate results. I'm in this polish business for keeps if it pans out as I expect it will. I believe in it, and that's more than half the battle to start with. I mean to convince people that they can't get along without it. In fact, I am sure when I give a practical demonstration of its qualities it will sell itself. Words are all right—and you can bet on it I can talk up the Invincible Lusterine at a 40-horse-power rate—but

results are better. I should like to exhibit a sample of my Lusterine at a world's fair alongside each of those twenty-seven specimens of polish that are already on the market. I guess I wouldn't need any better advertisement."

"That's right. You wouldn't."

"Well, I've put the matter squarely up to you. I guess I can raise enough money to start the ball rolling—that is, buy the ingredients of the Lusterine, the bottles to put it up in, and pay for the necessary printing. Are you in it with me, Sam?"

"Bet your life I am."

"P'raps you'd better ask your mother first. Here's a can partly full of the Lusterine. Take it with you, apply it to your furniture, then let your mother see the result. After that talk the matter over with her. Tell her what my proposition is, and get her permission to join with me. Then you'll know just where you're at. Ain't I right?"

"Yes," admitted Sam.

"That's settled, then," said Tom, shutting off the gas from under the kettle.

"Is it done?" asked his chum, gazing into the liquid mass, which had now assumed a very transparent amber hue.

"It's done. As soon as it cools I shall put it into those empty bottles I have in that box. By that time the printing—labels, circulars, and wrappers—will be ready, and then we'll put the Lusterine in shape for purchasers."

"That'll be fine," cried Sam, who was now so deeply interested in the new furniture polish that he could think of nothing else.

"Now let's go over to the ball field," suggested Tom. "Most of the fellows will be there this afternoon, and I feel in the humor of getting into a game."

"All right," replied Sam, who played second base for the High School team, and was a good one.

Tom led the way to the door, which he unlocked and threw wide open.

Just outside, on his hands and knees in the attitude of a listener, was Steven Porter, the one boy in his class at school whom Tom Sherwood never liked, because his manners were unpleasant, and he had earned the unenviable reputation of a sneak and tale-bearer.

CHAPTER III.

STEVE PORTER'S MISHAP.

"Steve Porter!" exclaimed Tom, in a tone of the greatest surprise. "What are you doing up here in our carriage-house?"

Steve scrambled to his feet in great confusion.

He had been caught in an embarrassing situation, and he looked guilty.

"I just came here to see you," replied Steve, in a sulky tone.

"Came to see me, eh?" replied Tom. "Then why were you listening at the door of my work-room?"

"Wasn't listenin'," replied Steve, his face growing redder than ever.

"What were you doing on your hands and knees with your ear at the key-hole, then?" asked Tom, severely.

"I dropped somethin', and stooped down to pick it up."

Sam laughed outright at this lame excuse.

"What did you drop?"

"I don't know as it makes any difference what I dropped," replied Steve, in his customary disagreeable manner.

"Well, what did you come here to see me about?" demanded Tom, sharply. "We are not on friendly terms, I believe."

"I heard you was makin' a furniture polish, and I came round to buy a bottle."

"You did, eh?"

Tom knew Steve was lying without the evidence in his countenance.

"Who told you I was making a furniture polish?"

"One of the boys."

"He's got a name, hasn't he?"

"Yes."

"Who is he, then?"

Steve was cornered, and he didn't know what to say.

Finally he blurted out the name of one of Tom's friends.

"You say Al Goodrich told you?"

"Yes."

"Look here, Steve, you know you're not telling the truth."

"Do you mean to say that I lie?" fired up Porter.

"That's a pretty strong word, Steve Porter; but I'm afraid it fits the case exactly."

"You'll be sorry for insultin' me this way," replied Steve, darkly.

"I hope not," answered Tom, coolly. "It isn't my fault that you have made yourself out a twister of the truth. I know that Al Goodrich didn't say any such thing."

"How do you know he didn't?" asked Steve, sulkily.

"Because I never said a word to him about making furniture polish."

"You are makin' it, ain't you?"

"What business is that of yours?"

"I s'pose a fellow can ask a civil question, can't he?"

"Look here, Steve Porter, why did you sneak in here? I didn't invite you to call on me."

"I didn't sneak in."

"Yes, you did. If you had walked up those stairs like a decent person I should have heard you. I won't stand for any monkey business from you or anybody else. You know what the fellows think of you."

"I don't know nothin' about it. I'm as good as anybody else."

"Well, I don't care whether you think you are or not. I want you to understand that I've no use for your society, so please keep on the other side of our fence hereafter."

If I catch you in this building again there'll be something doing that you won't like."

"Yah!" snarled Steve. "I'll get square with you for this."

"Will you? Just try it and see where you'll land. Now get out. You're trespassing on our property."

Steve Porter gave Tom a vindictive look, and walked down the stairs.

"The mean sneak was trying to find out what I do in that room," said Tom, as he locked the door and put the key in his pocket.

"He must have been listening to what we were talking about," replied Sam, "for he's got on to the furniture polish business."

"S'pose he has; it won't hurt me any. I don't care now who knows that I'm making the stuff. It'll be on the market in a day or two, anyway."

"It's a good thing you didn't tell me the secret of its composition, for then the beast might have got hold of it."

"That's right. I never suspected there was an eavesdropper outside. I'll say one thing for Henry, he doesn't go snooping around trying to discover what I'm up to, either out of personal curiosity or to carry tales to mother."

"You ought to have taken Steve and made him walk Spanish downstairs. You were too easy with him. Some fellows would have knocked the daylights out of him."

"That's what I'll do with him if he tries any funny tricks on me," said Tom, as he opened the gate and let himself and Sam out on the sidewalk.

Then they headed for the ball ground.

Steve Porter watched them go from behind a neighboring tree.

"How I hate that stuck-up Tom Sherwood!" he hissed. "Just as if he was any better than me! And that Sam Wiley, too, drat him! And all the rest of 'em, who are always jumpin' on me. I hate the whole lot of 'em, but Tom Sherwood worst of all. So they're goin' to the ball ground to play ball. If I went the fellows wouldn't let me play. They never let me do nothin'. I'd like to get square with the bunch. Well, I've found out somethin', anyway. Sherwood is makin' a furniture polish that he told Wiley is better than anythin' on the market. I'd like to know whether it is or not. If it is I'd like to steal it from him and sell it myself. If I could get into that room now he's away I might find out all about it. He said he'd fix me if he caught me in his carriage-house again. Bah! He won't be back in three hours. That'll give me plenty of time to find out what I want to know. There ain't anybody at home but the women servants in the kitchen. The coachman has taken Hen Sherwood and his mother out drivin', so the coast is clear for me. But how can I get into that room? He keeps the door locked always, I know. I'll go down to the locksmith in the next street, and tell him to lend me a bunch of keys to open an ordinary door with. That'll be great."

Full of this idea Steve Porter hurried to the locksmith, got a bunch of twenty-odd keys, and hiding them under his jacket, returned to the Sherwood carriage-house, mounted the stairs, and reaching the door of Tom's sanctum, began to try them, one after another, in the lock.

One of the keys fitted the lock, and the door swung open.

Steve took that particular key off the ring, entered the room, and locked the door after him.

Then he gazed with a great deal of curiosity about the room which had been as a sealed book to most of Tom's associates.

"I s'pose this is the furniture polish he's makin'?" said Steve to himself, looking into the copper kettle.

He picked up the ladle and began to stir it.

"I'd like to know what it's made of."

Then his sharp eyes spied the recipe and directions for making the common kind of polish, and he snatched it up and read it.

"I'll copy that," he breathed eagerly. "I've got his secret. Ho, ho! I'll make the stuff myself, and I'll sell it for half price and do him up. That's the way I'll fix him. Oh, how I hate him!"

Steve hurriedly scribbled off the list of ingredients and directions.

He didn't know how badly he was fooling himself, for he could have found that recipe in a dozen books of such things on sale at the bookstores.

The secret of the Invincible Lusterine lay entirely in the combination of a certain preparation found at paint stores, with the ordinary polish mixture as given in the recipe Steve held in his hand.

It was not necessary, or even good policy, for Tom to commit his formula to paper.

As long as the secret of his preparation remained in his own brain it was safe.

He intended to impart the matter to no one but his chum, Sam Wiley, in whom he had the most unlimited confidence.

Steve having put his transcription of the recipe in his pocket, now began to examine the room.

He looked at the chairs with the samples of polish on them, and the numbers pasted on each to identify them, but he couldn't make anything out of them.

Then he gave his attention to the rocker, and was astonished at its brilliant appearance.

"So this is his polish," he said, half aloud. "Well it's a good one. And now I've got the recipe for it."

He fairly hugged himself with joy at the idea.

"Sherwood's Invincible Lusterine—the polish without a rival," he read on a slip pinned upon the wall.

"So that's what he calls it, eh? The polish without a rival, is it?" he sneered. "We'll see. I'll call mine Porter's Incomparable Luster. Beware of Imitations," he chuckled.

He walked about the room examining everything he saw.

When he had satisfied his curiosity he returned to the kettle.

"I'd like to spoil this stuff on him. I heard him say it was all ready for bottling. Then maybe if I carried off the recipe he wouldn't be able to make any more, and I'd have the secret all to myself."

His eyes sparkled wickedly, and he looked around for something to throw into the kettle that would have the desired effect.

On a small shelf was a saucer of very white sand.

"That'll do," he grinned. "That'll make it gritty. Then it'll scratch any furniture it's applied to. It'll spoil the furniture and the sale of his polish. What fun that'll be!"

He reached for the sand.

In doing so he slipped on a round piece of metal which lay on the floor.

He reached out his hand to save himself, and accidentally caught hold of the kettle.

It went over with him, drenching him from head to foot, and filling his ears, nose, and mouth with the still hot liquid polish.

He uttered a yell that was heard in the kitchen of the Sherwood house, and then rolled about the floor in a paroxysm of pain.

The cook ran into the yard and listened, but not hearing any further cry concluded she had been mistaken in thinking the sound came from the carriage-house, especially as she had seen Tom and his chum, Sam, leave the place over half an hour before, and she knew the coachman was away.

Steve suffered considerable torture for the next fifteen minutes.

Then, blubbering like a child, he picked up a rag and tried to clean himself.

It was not an easy job, and he presented a sorry sight.

He was no longer interested, at least for the time being, in Sherwood's Invincible Lusterine, or any other kind of polish.

His only thought was to get away from the carriage-house and hunt up a druggist to repair his burns.

As soon as he got rid of the superfluous stuff he sneaked out of the room, relocked the door, took the ring of keys to the locksmith, who regarded his bedraggled appearance with some surprise, and then hurried off to the nearest drug store.

CHAPTER IV.

A GALLANT RESCUE.

In the meantime Tom Sherwood and Sam Wiley went to the ball field, and spent nearly three hours practising with their schoolmates.

They had a good time, as a matter of course.

At length the game was finished, and the young ball tossers dispersed for their homes.

Sam walked part of the way home with Tom, and left him at his own gate.

As Tom turned into the street above his own, the most tony thoroughfare in Englewood, his attention was suddenly attracted to the residence of Thomas Hanford, the president of the First National Bank of Englewood.

A suspicious-looking dark smoke was issuing from the tops of two windows on the second floor.

"Gee whiz!" exclaimed the boy, stopping and looking up at the house. "I believe Hanford's place is on fire."

Hardly had he uttered the words before he saw a spurt of flame crawl up the curtains of one of the windows, and the smoke grew denser.

Most any boy under the circumstances would have started in yelling "Fire!" and making Rome howl generally.

Tom had more presence of mind than that.

He darted for the automatic fire-alarm box, which he knew stood at the corner of the street, and sent in the alarm, then he rushed back to the burning building, which had already attracted the attention of several passers-by.

He sprang through one of the iron gates, flew across the lawn toward the rear of the mansion, and running to the kitchen annex gave the alarm to the cook and other servants downstairs.

In great consternation all of them tumbled out into the grounds.

The fire was now making good headway, and a crowd was beginning to collect in the street outside.

"Where's the family?" asked Tom of a hysterical maid.

"All out riding except Miss Olive.

"And where is Miss Olive?"

"Up in her room on the third floor. She has a severe headache, and couldn't go out this afternoon."

"On the third floor!" cried Tom. "My gracious! I must rush up and get her out, for half of the second floor is on fire, and is spreading every moment."

Tom, conscious that Miss Olive Hanford, the fifteen-year-old daughter of the house, was in great danger, darted for the kitchen once more with the intention of making his way upstairs to the third floor, and giving the young girl warning of her peril.

No sooner was he inside the house than the smell of burning wood came quite plainly to his nose.

When he reached the main hall on the first floor he found it foggy with smoke.

Flying up the broad stairway, two steps at a time, he was met at the head of the flight by a dense cloud of smoke which was pouring out through one of the doors, which stood ajar.

Tom had all he could do to pass this blinding pall, which half-suffocated him, and through which he had to fight his way to gain the floor above where the girl was lying down in one of the rooms.

He had no idea which door opened into Miss Olive's room, but time was too precious for him to stand on cere-

mony, so he threw open the first one at hand, and entered the apartment.

There was no one in it, so he tried the next, with a similar result.

Then he dashed into the front room, which was directly over the fire below.

The noise he made startled into wakefulness a lovely young girl, who had been lying asleep on the bed.

She looked at him in great surprise, for he was a stranger to her, and she was not accustomed to having her boudoir invaded in that rude fashion.

Olive Hanford scarcely knew whether she ought to scream or not under the circumstances, for though Tom didn't look very ferocious, he was certainly very much excited.

"Quick," he shouted, the moment his eyes rested on her. "Come with me. The house is on fire."

If the girl had been startled before she was more so now.

Her quick ears caught the jangle of the approaching fire-engines on the street, and the shouts and murmurings of the gathering crowd below were frightfully potent of the peril to which she was exposed.

She jumped to the floor and ran up to Tom.

She uttered a little shriek as she saw the thick smoke coming up the staircase and floating into the room.

The she flew to the closed window-blinds and threw them open.

A hoarse shout arose from the people in the street when they saw her in the room above the blazing story, from every window of which the flames and smoke were pouring out.

Tom rushed up and grabbed her by the arm.

"There is not a moment to lose if we are to escape by the stairway."

She understood, and permitted him to lead her out into the corridor.

But one look down the stairway showed both the utter impossibility of passing through that mass of smoke, now lighted up by the flames which were eating their way through the doors into the second landing.

"What shall we do?" gasped Olive Hanford, shrinking back and looking at the boy with frightened eyes.

Tom, circling her slender waist with his arm, drew her into the rear room, and throwing up one of the windows, looked out.

There was no escape for them in that direction—nothing but a clear drop of three stories to the lawn.

The smoke was now growing so dense on the third floor that it was a question of but a few minutes before they would be in a most desperate strait.

Then Tom thought of the roof.

There at any rate they would be able to breathe, and probably hold out until the firemen could raise their ladders and take them down.

"Where is the ladder leading to the roof?" he asked Olive, feverishly.

She tremblingly pointed to a door in a corner of the upper landing.

He dashed it open, ran up the steps, and unshipped the scuttle.

Then he came down again and assisted her up.

The pure air of heaven was a great relief to their parched throats and smarting eyes.

Tom made his way to the edge of the roof in front, and looked down at the throng below, and the active firemen who were bringing up their hose.

He saw that the flames had made their way into the third floor front room, and that the house was now threatened with complete destruction.

The building had an ell one story lower than where Tom and Olive stood, and the boy felt they must reach that somehow, as the fire had not yet got as far as that.

Had he been alone he would have thought nothing of jumping the distance, but he had the girl to save, and could not desert her that way.

While he was considering how to get her off the upper roof, the flames appeared over the front and opposite side of the roof, making it imperatively necessary for them to make a hasty change of base.

"We must get down to the roof of the ell," he said to his fair companion.

"How can we? Must I jump?" she asked, shrinking from the ordeal.

"I am going to let myself down as far as I can, and hold my position by a grip on the coping. You must do likewise, then throw your arms around me and slide down till you reach my feet, when you must drop. The distance will then be only a few feet."

She agreed to attempt this method, which seemed to be the only available one.

Tom carried out his part of it, then at his bidding Olive also lowered herself alongside of him, then grasped him about the neck and shoulders, and slowly allowed herself to slip down till she swung by her hold on his shoes only.

Then she dropped safely to the roof of the ell.

Tom followed her a moment after.

This had been quite an ordeal for him, as he weight had told upon his hands where he clung by his fingers on the narrow stone coping, half expecting it might give way under the strain brought to bear upon it.

They were now comparatively safe, and had only to wait till a ladder was raised, and they were both taken down.

As soon as she reached the lawn and knew that she was safe Olive fainted.

CHAPTER V.

A CHANGE COMES OVER THE SHERWOOD HOUSEHOLD.

By this time the Hanford residence was a mass of flames from the second story up, while the firemen had their

hands full trying to save the ground floor and its valuable contents.

Tom placed the unconscious Olive in the hands of one of the maids, and then retired to a distance to watch the progress of the fire.

An Argus-eyed reporter followed him up, and much against his will the boy gave his name and address, and such particulars of his experience in the burning house as the reporter wanted for his story.

The family were at dinner when Tom got back to his home.

"Where have you been, Thomas?" demanded his father, severely.

"At the fire in the next street, sir. Mr. Hanford's house was nearly destroyed."

"I might have known you were there."

"Your clothes smell dreadfully strong of smoke, Thomas," said his stepmother. "I don't think you ought to come to the table in that condition."

"Go to your room and put on another suit," said Mr. Sherwood.

Tom left the dining-room to obey his father's order.

When he got back the meal was nearly over.

However, that fact didn't affect his appetite.

Henry was the only one who asked him any questions about the fire, though Tom heard his father and mother conversing on the subject and speculating as to the extent of Mr. Hanford's loss, and how the blaze had started.

After dinner Tom went to his sanctum.

He thought he might as well put the supply of Invincible Lusterine he had made that afternoon into bottles, so as to have them all ready for labeling and wrapping.

He was amazed to find the copper kettle overturned on the floor, and its contents in pools and blotches in the vicinity of the gas-stove.

"Who the dickens has been in here?" Tom asked himself in dismay.

He went to the door, and looked at the lock to see if it had been tampered with, but there were no signs of such a thing.

Then he examined the open window-sill for some indication that a ladder might have been used to effect an entrance through it.

He couldn't find any scratches.

"I'll go down and see if the ladder has been disturbed lately," he said.

He did, but the ladder lay in its accustomed position just as he had noticed it that morning.

"This ladder hasn't been used to-day," he muttered. "Whoever was in my work-room got in by the door, and he must have had a duplicate key to my own. I don't like the looks of this for a cent. I must get a new lock."

He returned to the room and cleaned up the damage that had been done.

"I'm a dollar out and three hours' time. I'd give something to know who my undesirable visitor was. I wonder if he could have been Steve Porter? It would be very like

him to do such a thing to get square with me for the calling-down I handed him out this afternoon. If I find out that it was him I'll make him pay for the damage or take it out of his hide."

It was half-past eight o'clock, and the Sherwood family were gathered in their sitting-room.

Mr. Sherwood was reading a current copy of one of the monthly magazines, his wife was sewing, while Tom and Henry were seated on opposite sides of the center-table absorbed in their favorite literature.

At that moment the door-bell rang.

"I wonder who that can be?" said Mrs. Sherwood, looking up from her work.

"I have no idea," replied her husband, as the patter of the maid's feet was heard in the hall.

Presently the maid knocked at the door.

"Come in," said Mr. Sherwood.

"There's a gentleman in the parlor, sir. He wishes to see Tom."

Henry looked at his half-brother, and Tom himself appeared to be surprised.

He could not imagine who the gentleman was who had called to see him.

"Wishes to see Tom?" exclaimed Mr. Sherwood. "Did he say what his name was?"

"Yes, sir. It's Hanford."

"Hanford!" ejaculated Tom's father in some astonishment, for he did not enjoy the acquaintance of the bank president. "Did you say he asked for Tom?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know Mr. Hanford, Tom?" asked his father, looking hard at his son.

"No, sir," replied the boy, who began to have an idea why the nabob had called at their house.

"I'll go and see him myself," said Mr. Sherwood, suiting the action to the word.

He was absent about five minutes when he returned and called his eldest son out of the sitting-room.

"Why didn't you tell us that you saved Mr. Hanford's daughter from being burned to death in the fire this afternoon?" he said to Tom.

"Neither you nor mother gave me much chance to say anything about the fire when I came in to dinner."

"You have had plenty of opportunity to mention the circumstance since you have been in the sitting-room."

"I didn't think you would feel particularly interested in my connection with the affair; besides, I didn't do anything extraordinary, anyway," replied Tom.

"Didn't do anything extraordinary, eh? Didn't you go into the burning house, make your way through the smoke and fire to the third floor where Mr. Hanford's daughter was asleep, get her to the roof, and then assist her down to the roof of the ell. from which the firemen rescued you both?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you don't call that anything out of the ordinary? Go into the parlor. Mr. Hanford wants to see you."

"Tom Sherwood, I am under the greatest of obligations to you for the service you rendered my daughter Olive during the fire at my residence," said the banker as soon as Tom entered the parlor. "My daughter says that but for you she would certainly have been burned to death, as she never would have been able to have got out of the house herself. She is our only child, my lad," continued Mr. Hanford, with emotion, "so you may easily imagine how her mother and I feel toward you for your brave conduct in her behalf. You took many chances in going to her assistance, and might have shared the same fate you tried, successfully, I am happy to say, to avert. We shall never forget the debt we owe you, neither will Olive, who is more than anxious to meet you again, so as to express her gratitude. We are now stopping temporarily at my sister's home on Hancock street. The number is 222. You must call there to-morrow without fail, as Mrs. Hanford is very anxious to thank you herself."

"I'm glad I happened to come along at the right moment, sir," replied the boy. "I only did what anybody should have done under the circumstances," he added modestly.

Mr. Hanford, however, insisted that he had acted like a young hero, and that every dollar he owned in the world would be insufficient to cancel the debt he owed Tom if he were to attempt to settle the obligation in that way.

"Now, my lad, you can rely on our personal friendship after this. You must call and see us, Olive in particular, as often as you feel disposed to do so. And if ever I can do you a favor don't fail to let me know."

With these words, and exacting a promise from Tom that he would surely call at 222 Hancock street next day, the banker took his departure.

When Tom returned to the sitting-room he found his mother and father talking about him, with Henry as an interested listener.

"Your mother and I wish to hear the whole story about your rescue of Mr. Hanford's daughter," said Mr. Sherwood, in a tone somewhat different to that which he was accustomed to use toward his first-born. "From the little I heard from Mr. Hanford's lips it would appear that you performed a highly commendable action."

Tom regarded his father with some surprise.

This was the first time within his recollection that Mr. Sherwood had addressed him in that strain.

His stepmother, too, seemed to view him in a different light.

Her customary coldness and indifference toward her stepson appeared to have disappeared, and her manner, as she looked at him, was almost pleasant.

Henry's face also showed an expectant interest in his half-brother, hitherto wanting in him.

Evidently the visit of the nabob of Englewood on Tom, together with the reason therefor, had produced a remarkable effect in the Sherwood household.

We might remark here that Mrs. Sherwood had aspired unsuccessfully to gain a foothold in the upper social set

in which the Hanfords moved, and it is possible she now scented a chance of attaining her object through Tom.

In response to his father's request the boy narrated his adventure from the moment he had first seen the smoke issuing from the tops of the windows until he delivered Olive Hanford over to her mother's maid.

"You have more courage than I ever gave you credit for, Tom," said his father, somewhat patronizingly. "There is no doubt but your name will be in the morning papers, and that you will be highly praised for your prompt action and presence of mind. I am glad to see that you were not wanting when the emergency presented itself."

"You acted just like the hero in a story-book, Tom," put in Henry, affably.

"I trust, Thomas, that you will cultivate the acquaintance of the Hanfords," said his stepmother. "They are very rich, and move in our best society."

"I must have done a big thing," grinned Tom, as he went to his room that night, "when it has made such a wonderful change in the home atmosphere."

CHAPTER VI.

TOM CALLS ON OLIVE HANFORD.

When Tom appeared at the breakfast table next morning he was treated with a degree of consideration that was entirely new to him.

His father and stepmother both wished him good-morning, while Henry was remarkably affable toward him.

"Your name is in the paper this morning, Tom," grinned Henry. "Father has just been reading the full account of your doings at the Hanford fire."

"Both the Times and News refer in very high terms to your gallant action, as they call it," said Mr. Sherwood, as he sipped his coffee. "When you have finished your breakfast you can read what they have to say about the fire."

In due time Tom got hold of the two morning dailies published in Englewood, and read the thrilling account of his rescue of Olive Hanford.

The reporters had spread themselves, and made the most of the incident.

Indeed, Tom hardly recognized his connection with the glowing descriptions which appeared in print.

The papers made him out a hero in spite of himself, and it was probable that half the people of the town were talking about him at that moment.

Sam Wiley was an unusually early visitor that morning.

His mother took the Times, and when Sam read about the fire he nearly had a fit when he saw his chum's name and discovered what he had done the previous afternoon.

Tom was hard at work in his sanctum making a fresh supply of his Lusterine to replace what had been destroyed when Sam made his appearance.

"Hello, Tom," greeted Sam, "what the dickens have you been up to? You've got your name in the papers as a hero of the first water. Tell me all about it."

"If you've read the morning paper you know as much, or even more, than I do about the affair. What those reporters can't do with a sensational story isn't worth mentioning," laughed Tom.

"If you only had your Lusterine ready now that would be a fine advertisement for you to begin business with," snickered Sam. "Making a fresh supply of it, are you? Got the other lot bottled, I s'pose."

"No, I haven't. The kettleful you saw yesterday is gone to the bow-wows."

"How's that?" asked Sam, in surprise.

"Found it all over the floor when I came up here last evening."

"You did?"

"I did. Somebody got in here while I was away at the ball field, and upset the kettle."

"Suffering Saucepans! Is that a fact?" in astonishment.

"That's a fact. Can't you see the stains on the boards?"

Sam saw them plain enough.

"Who could have served you such a scurvy trick as that?"

"I suspect Steve Porter; but I have no evidence against him."

"Steve Porter! Would he have the nerve to come back here after what you said to him yesterday?"

"It is not impossible."

"How could he have got in?"

"Whoever the visitor was he has a key that fits the lock. That reminds me, I must get the locksmith to put a new lock on my door."

"I should say you must. If Steve Porter got in here and you can prove it, why, you could have him arrested."

"I'd rather give him a good licking."

"Well, he seems to be the only fellow besides myself who knows you manufactured some furniture polish. He is always prying around to see what he can find out about other people's business. Then we caught him peeking through the keyhole. In my opinion he's the guilty party."

"That's what I think. Just watch this stuff, will you, Sam. You must stir it continually so that it won't burn. I'm going around to the locksmith."

Tom started off, and in a short time returned with the locksmith from the next street, the same one of whom Steven Porter had borrowed the bunch of keys.

"I want this lock removed, and the one I picked out in your place put on this door," said Tom.

"All right, sir," replied the man.

"Some person got in here yesterday with a key that fitted the present lock, and upset a kettle of furniture polish I had made on the floor. I don't want it to happen again."

"I wonder if it could have been that boy who came in my shop yesterday afternoon and borrowed a ring of keys from

me. He said he wanted to open a door in his house, the key to which had been mislaid. He paid me afterward for a key he retained. The reason I mention it is that when he first came into my place he looked all right, but when he came to return the ring of keys he was a wreck," grinned the man.

"A wreck! What do you mean?" asked Tom, with some interest.

"His clothes were all daubed with some kind of light paint or varnish, while his face had the appearance of having been scalded. He seemed to be suffering pain. I asked him what was the matter, but he wouldn't tell me."

"What sort of looking boy was he?" inquired Tom, with added interest.

The locksmith described Steve Porter so well that Tom had little doubt who his visitor was.

"I think I know him," replied Tom, grimly. "He must have upset the kettle by accident somehow, though I can't imagine how he could do that. Looks as if he fell down and pulled the kettle over on him. Well, he was served well right for coming in here. I daresay he has been sufficiently punished."

"I should liked to have seen him after the accident," grinned Sam.

The locksmith changed the locks and then went away.

When Tom Sherwood went into the house to lunch he had five dozen bottles of his lusterine labeled and standing on a wide bench in front of one of the windows ready to be wrapped up as soon as he got the wrappers from the printer.

Sam had been instructed in the mystery of the composition of the polish, and shown how to prepare it.

He was an enthusiastic assistant, and a firm believer in its ultimate success as a commercial product.

He came back after he had had his own lunch, and started in to manufacture the stuff himself in order to show Tom that he could do it all right.

About half-past two Tom left him in charge of the sanctum and went to his room to dress for his visit to the Hanfords.

"You're looking swell, old man," grinned Sam, when he came back to see if his chum wanted any further points before he left. "Got on your Sunday rig, eh?"

"That's right. A fellow has got to look nice when he calls on a pretty girl, especially when she belongs to the upper crust like Olive Hanford," laughed Tom.

"Bet your life," replied Sam. "I always put on my glad rags when I go to see my steady."

"Who's that? Sadie Cobb?"

Sam grinned.

"Well, you can shut up the shop when you get through if I'm not back."

"All right. What'll I do with the key?"

"Hand it to the cook."

Sam said he would and Tom started for Hancock street.

When he rang the bell at No. 222, the servant took his name and showed him into the parlor.

Presently Olive came tripping downstairs looking as sweet as a box of caramels.

"It's awfully nice of you to call so soon, Mr. Sherwood," said Olive, seating herself beside him.

"It's a great privilege to be permitted to call on such a nice girl as you are," replied Tom, and then he blushed as if astonished at his own nerve.

Olive blushed, too, and looked a bit embarrassed; but she recovered herself in a moment and burst into a merry laugh.

"You are certainly not a bashful boy," she said. "I am very much obliged to you for the compliment."

"You are welcome," he replied. "I hope you have suffered no ill-effects from the excitement of yesterday's fire."

"No. I am all right again, thank you."

Then she hastened to assure Tom of her gratitude for his gallant assistance in her hour of need.

"I shall never forget what I owe you, Mr. Sherwood—never," she added, earnestly. "I am so dreadfully afraid of fire that I know I never should have escaped yesterday but for you."

"I am very glad I got you out all right."

"It was very brave of you to venture upstairs in all that suffocating smoke. I don't see how you managed to do it."

"I knew you were up there exposed to great danger, and I believed it to be my duty to save you at any cost."

"Thank you, Mr. Sherwood. I shall look upon you after this as the bravest boy in Englewood."

"Oh, there are others, I guess," laughed Tom. "Only they haven't had the opportunity to show what's in them."

At this point Mrs. Hanford entered the parlor.

She greeted Tom cordially, and thanked him with much feeling for what he had done for her daughter.

"We hope to number you among our most valued friends hereafter, Mr. Sherwood," she said, with a smile. "I hope you will call on us again before we go to the Catskills for the summer."

"I shall be pleased to do so," replied Tom. "When do you expect to go away?"

"It will probably be three weeks before we can leave Englewood, as most of our summer gowns were destroyed by the fire, and they will have to be replaced."

"It is quite too provoking to think that we lost so many pretty things, and just as we were about to go away, too," said Olive, with a charming grimace. "Why, one of my dresses was a perfect dream."

"We should be pleased to have you stay to dinner," said Mrs. Hanford. "Mr. Hanford will be glad to see you, and I should like you to meet Mr. Wilson."

As Olive added her persuasions, Tom accepted the invitation.

Shortly afterward Mrs. Wilson, Olive's aunt, came in, and he was introduced to her.

She also had some very nice things to say to him about

his courageous conduct at the fire, and how much the family was indebted to him for saving Olive's life.

Mr. Hanford made his appearance about five o'clock, and was much pleased on seeing Tom.

Shortly afterward Mr. Wilson came home, and the boy was duly presented to him.

Dinner was served about seven, and Tom enjoyed it very much, especially as Olive sat beside him, and made herself very entertaining.

Our hero prolonged his visit until nine o'clock, and then took his leave, promising Olive that he would call on her before she went to the country.

CHAPTER VII.

TOM STARTS OUT TO CREATE A DEMAND FOR THE INVINCIBLE LUSTERINE.

Tom had originally decided to make a house-to-house canvass in Englewood with his Lusterine, for the purpose of introducing it at first on a small scale.

After further deliberation he came to the conclusion that this way was too slow and unsatisfactory—that it ought to be introduced on a more extensive scale.

He also concluded not to do anything in Englewood until after his stepmother and Henry had gone to the mountains, lest she object to his business plans.

Accordingly, he resolved to begin operations in Dundee, a neighboring town.

There was a large piano factory in Dundee, and Tom determined to interview the manager and see if he couldn't persuade him to give his Lusterine a trial on the cases.

With this purpose in view he purchased a small second-hand suit-case, packed a sample can and a couple of dozen bottles of his polish in it, together with slabs of differently stained woods, shaved thin, showing the results attained by the Invincible Lusterine, and took the train one morning for Dundee.

He found that the piano factory was situated on the outskirts of the town, so he boarded an electric car that went by the door.

Reaching the factory he entered the office, which was on the ground floor, and asked to see the manager.

He was admitted to the private office.

"Mr. Smith," he began, in a business-like way, "I wish to call your attention to a new wood polish I have lately invented, and which is specially adapted for piano cases. You are using, I suppose, one of the best polishes on the market on your cases, but when you have given my Lusterine a fair test I'll guarantee that you won't want to use any other polish."

The manager of the famous Dundee pianos looked at Tom with an indulgent smile.

"The polish we use is an established brand of the finest French article, and fills the bill so well that we are perfect-

ly satisfied with the results we get from it, and consequently we couldn't think of making any change."

"Not even for a superior article, sir?"

"There's no American polish on the market to-day that approaches the French product which we have been using for years."

"I do not dispute your statement, sir; but what I do say is this, that my Invincible Lusterine is so far ahead of any French polish manufactured as to be in a class by itself."

Manager Smith favored Tom with a half-incredulous, half-pitying smile.

"Young man, you have a very expansive idea of your Lusterine, as you call it; but I am afraid you are only wasting my time as well as your own in seeking to boom it here. As I have already said, the polish we use is perfectly satisfactory, and we do not intend to make a change."

Tom, however, was not rebuffed.

"All right, you know your business, sir. However, I should like to show you what my Lusterine is capable of doing. I have a few sample woods in my bag here I hope you will permit me to show you. I am sure you will not refuse me that favor, as I have come all the way from Englewood to exhibit them to you."

"Very well," replied Mr. Smith, a bit impatiently. "I will look at them."

Tom opened his suit case, and taking out the half-dozen pieces of thin wood stained in different tints, which he had carefully treated with his Lusterine, laid them upon the manager's desk.

The gloss upon them fairly dazzled the manager of the piano works.

He took them up one by one, and examined them carefully.

"What do you think of the luster? Is there a French polish made that gives results anything like that? I leave it to yourself."

That's the way Tom put it up to the manager.

"I must admit that that is a marvelous polish," replied the astonished Mr. Smith. "Do you mean to say that this is your invention?"

"Yes, sir."

"I should like to try this on a sample case, and see if it will produce similar results."

"I was about to propose that, sir. I have brought a tin full of the Lusterine for that purpose. Let one of your men give a piano case two coats of this, according to the directions on the label, and you'll be surprised at the looks of the case. I've already tried it on our piano case at home, and it brought out the original color in an altogether different and improved light."

Tom handed the manager the sample can he had brought with him.

"It isn't necessary for me to say another word in favor of my Lusterine. The stuff will speak for itself as soon as you give it a chance, much more effectively than I could

represent it if I talked all day," said the boy, rising to take his leave. "There is my business card. I shall be glad to hear from you as soon as you have had the chance to test my luster, whether you decide to substitute it for your present polish or not."

"I will write you in a few days on the subject, Mr. Sherwood. Good-day."

"Good-day, sir," and Tom left the manager's office.

The rest of the day the young salesman spent among the furniture dealers of Dundee, demonstrating the superiority of his Lusterine over every other polish in the market.

He succeeded in convincing the majority of the furniture houses that his article had merits not to be lightly thrust aside.

In each case he left a sample bottle with the firm to be applied to a single article of furniture, said article to be afterwards placed in their show window as an advertisement of the Lusterine if it fulfilled all the claims Tom made for it.

In that case a supply of the Invincible Lusterine was to be forwarded on sale.

"It will take some little capital to introduce my luster in this way," thought Tom, after he had boarded the train for Englewood, "but it seems to be the most satisfactory and effective way to do it. I must raise money somehow. If I get a large order from the piano people I'll have to give thirty days' credit, I suppose, and where I place it on sale I'll be obliged to wait some time for returns. I see now one can't embark in any decent kind of business without a wad behind him."

The disadvantage that handicapped Tom was the lack of the necessary wad.

CHAPTER VIII.

"PORTER'S INCOMPARABLE LUSTER."

When Tom reached home he found a small package and a letter stamped with an embossed monogram awaiting him.

It had been left by one of the Hanford servants, so his stepmother told him.

Both she and Henry were exceedingly curious as to the nature of its contents.

Tom opened the letter first.

It read as follows:

"My dear Mr. Sherwood: I beg you will accept the accompanying watch and chain from Mrs. Hanford and myself, as well as the attached charm from my daughter Olive, as a slight token of our appreciation for your gallant conduct at the fire which resulted in the partial destruction of our home on Lincoln street. With the most heartfelt gratitude to you, I remain,

"Very sincerely yours,

"Thomas Hanford."

"Let's see the watch and charm, Tom," asked Henry eagerly.

Tom opened the package and found a neat box inside bearing the imprint of the leading jeweler of Englewood.

Removing the cover and a shield of cotton underneath, there were revealed a magnificent gold watch and heavy chain, together with a handsome diamond-encrusted charm.

Henry gazed enviously upon the splendid and valuable present his half-brother had received.

He owned a very pretty little gold watch himself, while Tom heretofore had been favored with only a plain silver one; but this watch, with its engraved inscription: "Presented to Thomas Sherwood, in gratitude for his gallant rescue of Olive Hanford, June 6, 1906," made his own timepiece look like thirty cents.

"It is very handsome," remarked Mrs. Sherwood, taking the watch out of its bed of cotton and examining it. "It is too expensive for you to wear every day, Thomas," she added.

Tom said nothing, but when he carried it up to his room he thought that as the watch was his property he ought to be the best judge of when he should wear it.

After admiring it for some time, especially the lovely charm, which he appreciated even more than the watch because it was Olive's personal gift, he finally substituted it for his plain silver time-piece and chain.

"As I am a man of business now, I ought to put on a good front," he remarked to himself. "It is well to impress people with a sense of your importance when you approach them as I have to do to talk up my Invincible Lusterine."

That evening he walked over to Sam's house to tell him about what he had done in Dundee that day.

"You did fine," said Sam, enthusiastically. "Do you think the piano factory will use the Lusterine?"

"I couldn't say, Sam; but if they do it will add a whole lot to the looks of their piano cases."

"Bet your life it will. You had great luck with the Dundee furniture men, didn't you? They ought to be able to sell plenty of the Lusterine if they advertise it in their show windows, as you say they agreed to do."

"That's right. It should take like hot cakes, for it will make old furniture look like new every time."

"Where are you going next, Tom?"

"I shall take a trip to Tuckerton to-morrow, Unionville next day, and Pomona on Saturday. That will about wind up our present supply of Lusterine. Of course, you understand, Sam, that we can expect no revenue from this introductory output. That is what is bothering me now. I ought to have several gross of Lusterine made up to dispose of in this way."

"That will take money, won't it?" said Sam, with a drop in his countenance, for he had expected that Tom would get paid for every bottle of the luster manufactured.

"I should say it will. And the worst of it is I don't know where I shall get the money from to carry out my new ideas."

"I'm afraid we'll have to go back to your original plan of selling the stuff direct to consumers for a while at least."

"No, I don't want to do that. I want to interest the dealers in its sale, and thus create a steady demand. That is the way to build up a regular business. By and by, when we can afford the expense, I mean to advertise it as extensively as possible. For the present I want to make the thing pan out enough to allow you five dollars a week income when vacation is up, and your mother looks to you for returns."

"How about yourself, Tom?"

"Oh, I'm not worrying about myself. The future will take care of me."

"S'pose we were to get a large order from the piano factory next week, could we fill it? The materials cost money, you know."

"I'd fill it somehow. I shouldn't let anything like that get away from me after working it up. Even if we got the order we couldn't expect the cash right away."

"Why not?" asked Sam, in some surprise.

"Because all responsible firms demand and are accorded a certain margin of credit—30, 60, or 90 days, as the case may be."

"Sizzling Saucepans! Is that so?"

"That's so."

"Then where do we come in?"

"We must have a little capital to wrestle with the emergency."

"Where are we going to get it?"

"That is the problem my gray matter is struggling with."

"And if your gray matter doesn't help you out, what then?"

"Don't ask me too many serious questions all at once, Sam. All I ask you is not to get discouraged. I look to you to help me out with the manufacturing end—the rest I will attend to. I'm going to pull out if I break a leg doing it."

"When are your stepmother and Henry going to the mountains?"

"Next week."

"Then you're going to canvass this town, aren't you?"

"That's what I am."

"You'll need a new supply of the Lusterine."

"We'll have it, if I have to get credit at the stores where I bought my last materials."

"Will the storekeepers charge it up to you or to your folks?"

"They'll have to charge it to me or not at all."

"I wish I had some money to help you out," said Sam, earnestly.

"I did not expect to look to you for any money, Sam."

"But I am really not entitled to an interest in your business unless I put up for it."

"You can pay for your interest one of these days out of your profits."

"That's pretty liberal of you, Tom, considering you're strapped at the very moment you need money to carry this thing on. You could easily sell a half interest in your

Lusterine for good money, and put yourself on Easy street right away."

"Probably I could, but I'm not going to. You're the only partner I want, Sam. We've been chums right along all through High School, and now we'll sink or swim together in this business."

"Tom, I'll never forget what you're doing for me. You are a trump."

"Thanks. So are you. Come out and let us take a walk."

They took their way up the main street, occasionally looking in at the show windows as they passed along.

Suddenly Sam grabbed his companion by the arm, and drew him up to the window of a small artistic cabinet-maker's store.

"Dancing dervishes! Look there, will you!" he cried, greatly excited.

Tom looked.

In the window was a neatly painted card-board sign, standing as a background to a dozen labeled bottles containing a dark-colored liquid.

The sign read:

PORTER'S INCOMPARABLE LUSTER.

BEWARE OF IMITATIONS!

The only thing of its kind on the market. Only Ten Cents a bottle—three bottles for a quarter. Buy it and try it. Money refunded if not satisfactory. Steven Porter, Inventor and Manufacturer. Danny Mack, General Sales Agent.

CHAPTER IX.

"STOP THIEF!"

"Well, what do you think of that?" exclaimed Sam, in a tone of the deepest disgust. "Wouldn't that jar you!"

"Porter's Incomparable Luster, eh?" chuckled Tom. "I wonder what kind of stuff it is? Let's go in and see some samples of what it'll do."

They walked into the shop and came face to face with Steve Porter himself.

"What do you want here?" he asked, with a sardonic grin.

"We don't want to see you, at any rate," replied Tom, coolly.

"Then you'd better get out again," replied Steve, in a nasty tone.

"Are you running this store?" asked Tom.

"What's that to you?"

Tom shoved by him, went up to the counter, and rapped on it.

"What do you want? This is my uncle's store. He's out just now."

"Oh, this is your uncle's store, is it? There's a sign in

the window advertising a new furniture polish. I wanted to see what it looks like."

"Jealous, are you, 'cause I've got ahead of you," grinned Steve.

"I'm not worrying about that. Trot out a sample of your polish, and if it's as good as mine I'll take my hat off to you."

"I s'pose you think it isn't?"

"I'm not supposing anything till I see the goods. Show up your Incomparable Luster. Produce a sample of what it can accomplish."

"There it is on that chair," replied Steve complacently.

Tom and his chum immediately looked at the chair in question.

It had a fair polish on it, but nothing extraordinary nor different from what could be obtained from any furniture polish on the market.

"Is this a fair sample of your luster?" asked Tom.

"Yes, it is. What's the matter with it?"

Tom looked at Sam, and Sam returned the glance—then both grinned broadly.

Steve got his back up at once.

"Came in here to make fun of it, did you?" he snarled. "You'd better get out."

"No, we're not making fun of the polish. We're only thinking about your nerve in calling that shine an Incomparable Luster, when it's only a plain, everyday polish."

"It's better than your old stuff, at any rate," cried Steve, angrily.

"How do you know it is?"

"I know it is."

"We haven't put a drop of it on sale in this town yet, so how do you happen to be so well informed?"

"That's my business."

"Then I suppose it was you who got into my workshop after I told you to keep away, and upset that kettle full of my Lusterine."

"Who says I did?" demanded Steve, aggressively.

"Well, I say so, if you want to know."

"You're a liar if you say I did any such thing," blustered Steven.

"Thanks. You're a gentleman, I don't think."

"Did you come in here to insult me?"

"No; we came in here to see your Incomparable Luster," grinned Tom.

"I want to know by what right you say I entered your workshop."

"Well, you borrowed some keys from the locksmith in the street below my house, and you used one of those keys to unlock the door of my room."

"I didn't do no such thing."

"You upset the stuff that was in the kettle on your clothes."

"It's a lie, I tell you."

"The locksmith told me that when you brought back the keys you borrowed your clothes were all spattered with a composition resembling my Lusterine."

"He told you a lie."

"All right. We'll let it go at that. You know whether you're guilty or not."

"I wish you'd get out of here."

"We're going, as we've found out all we want to know. If I was you I wouldn't try to fool the public with that furniture polish. You are putting up claims that you can't make good, and may get into trouble."

"You go to grass. I know my business."

"Maybe you do, but I doubt it," replied Tom, as he and Sam walked toward the door.

"Yaw!" snorted Steve after them. "Don't come in here again."

"I won't until I come in to show your uncle what my Lusterine is like, and get him to advertise it in his window in place of your incomparable fraud."

"Don't you dare to do that," yelled Steve, dancing about the store like a wild Indian. "He wouldn't have anything to do with your old stuff."

"He will if he consults his own interests. I'm going to put my Lusterine into every furniture store in town."

With that parting shot Tom and his friend Sam walked out of the cabinet-maker's store, leaving Steve Porter wild with rage.

Tom went to Tuckerville on the following day, and succeeded in getting most of the furniture stores to put his Lusterine on sale after he had shown what it would do.

He was unable to leave more than two bottles of the luster at each place, owing to his limited supply.

Similar results attended his trips to Unionville on Friday and Pomona on Saturday.

"No use talking," he said to himself, on his way home from the latter place. "We've got to make a bigger supply if I'm going to do business. The dealers are all taking kindly to it, and they wouldn't do that unless they saw something in it."

But a bigger supply couldn't be produced without money, or credit for the time being.

On Monday of the following week Mrs. Sherwood and Henry departed for the summer resort they had selected.

Tom, much to his surprise, was invited to go along with them, but he politely declined on the plea of prior arrangements.

Henry tried to discover what those arrangements were, but did not succeed.

Mrs. Sherwood had an idea that perhaps Mrs. Hanford and her daughter had invited him to accompany them to the Catskills.

Tom succeeded in procuring enough raw material on credit to manufacture a sufficient supply of his luster to enable him to put the stuff on sale throughout Englewood.

He also stood the printer up for a hundred show cards to put into the windows.

He didn't bother visiting Steve Porter's uncle, as he didn't care to chance another run-in with Steve himself.

He found out that Steve had visited the principal stores ahead of him in an effort to get them to handle his polish,

but was not successful even at one place, as his luster had no particular merits to attract notice to itself.

While visiting a small cabinetmaker's shop in the residential section Tom ran across Steve and his side partner, Danny Mack, making a house-to-house canvass with the incomparable Luster.

They both gave him black looks, and would have attacked him if they had dared.

When he came out of the shop he found them standing on the other side of the street.

Instead of continuing their canvass they started to follow him wherever he went, much to his annoyance.

He wondered what they were up to, but of course could not tell what their object was in dogging his steps.

"I s'pose they want to see where I go. They're welcome to. I don't believe it will do them any good."

Tom took in as many more places, all small shops, as he had bottles of Lusterine to supply.

At all such shops he sold from one to three bottles outright at a discount for cash, and left a show card with each.

The retail price of his Lusterine was twenty-five cents—the wholesale, fifteen.

Having sold out entirely, and with about \$6 in his pocket, half of which was profit, Tom started for home.

As he was crossing a certain street a carriage whizzed past, and a small package dropped out of it almost at his fee.

Tom picked it up, shouted to the driver, and as he paid no attention started to give chase to the vehicle in order to return the package, which he saw had no name or address on it.

The moment he did so Steve Porter and Danny Mack, who saw the whole thing, started after him yelling "Stop Thief!" at the top of their voices.

Their cries, as a matter of course, attracted immediate attention, and people on the sidewalk turned and looked after Tom.

Several joined Steve and Danny in the pursuit.

Tom was so intent on overtaking the carriage that he was not aware of the growing excitement behind him.

Seeing the vehicle slow up to let a car pass at the next corner, he put on a fresh burst of speed, but it dashed on again before he could catch it.

Steve was not much of a runner, and his friend Danny soon distanced him and pushed his way to the front of the people who had joined in the chase of the unsuspecting boy.

The excitement grew apace as another block was covered by pursuers and pursued.

"Stop thief!" roared Danny Mack again and again as he led the crowd that followed close on the boy's heels.

A policeman standing on the corner immediately joined in the chase.

It was a strenuous moment for Tom Sherwood.

CHAPTER X.

WHAT WAS IN THE PACKAGE TOM FOUND.

An electric car came dashing down the street at that moment, and as Tom was beginning to realize that he would never be able to overtake the carriage on foot he made a dash for the car, boarded it with a jump, and was whisked off at a rapid pace.

The conductor was inside collecting a fare at the time, and Tom passed rapidly by him and stepped out on the platform where the motorman stood.

"I've picked up a package which was dropped by someone in yonder carriage. I'm trying to catch up with it. Don't you think you could put on a little extra speed for half a block or so?"

"Sure," replied the motorman, and he let her out another notch.

The car bounded ahead at a faster pace, leaving Tom's pursuers hopelessly in the rear, and the fun of it all was that the boy never dreamed that he had been chased.

Tom now had great hopes of overtaking the carriage when, as the next corner was approached, the conductor rang the bell to stop the car.

"That settles it," said the boy, as he saw the carriage turn up the street. "I must trust to my legs again."

But he was now down in the crowded business section, and he found that he could not make sufficient headway to reach the fast-disappearing carriage, so he was compelled to give up the pursuit and continue on home.

Sam, who had gone out on a house-to-house tour with a supply of Lusterine, had not yet returned when Tom went up to his sanctum.

So our hero sat down near his work-bench and unwrapped the bundle to see if he could find inside any clew to the rightful owner.

The bundle contained twenty \$1,000 coupon Government four-per-cent bonds.

"Gee whiz! What a find! And not a scrap of information to show who they belong to. When the owner discovers his loss I'll bet he'll pull his hair out by the roots. I must show them to father and ask his advice in the matter."

Just then Sam came bustling in empty-handed.

"I've sold every bottle, Tom," he cried gleefully. "Twenty bottles at 25 cents a bottle is \$5, and here is the coin to prove it."

He slapped down a handful of silver on the bench.

"How did you make out yourself," he added.

"First-class. I've brought back \$6. You made the most profit, as you got the retail price. I disposed of all but two bottles for 15 cents each."

"Six and five are eleven," counted Sam. "Let me see what our profit is this afternoon."

He figured up and found that it amounted to \$6.50.

"If we could do that every day we could keep the ball rolling in great shape," he said, enthusiastically.

"I expect we shall make ten times that amount in a day when we get the business in good running shape."

"Ten times!" gasped Sam, his eyes protruding with wonder.

"Sure. Why not? By and by everybody will want Sherwood's Invincible Lusterine. We'll have the monopoly of its sale. Everybody'll have to come to see us; by us I mean our jobbers and agents, for it, and consequently the money will roll in on us like the water over the falls of Niagara. We'll have our factory, of which you'll be the superintendent; our busy shipping department; our book-keepers, advertising manager, cashier, stenographers—in fact, we'll have a whole army of employees, all drawing good wages, and taking their hats off to us."

"That would be fine if it came true."

"Came true! Why, of course it'll come true."

"I wish I could think so."

"I've made up my mind to make it come true. That's the only way to get there. I'm going to have a fat bank account at the First National long before I get bald-headed."

"And I suppose you'll marry Olive Hanford and live happy ever after," snickered Sam.

"I don't know about that part of it," blushed Tom. "She might not have me, you know."

"Oh, she'll have you fast enough if you pile up the dough."

"I shouldn't want her if I thought it was only a question of money."

"Well, the girls all seem to have their eyes skinned for the money these days. Hello, what's those documents you have in your hand?"

"These documents are United States Government bonds."

"Go on. What are you giving me?" replied Sam, incredulously.

"Don't you believe what I say? Just take a look."

"Gee! They are for fair. Where did you get such a lot of 'em?"

"Picked them up in the street."

"You did what?"

"Picked them up, I tell you."

"Do you mean that?"

"I do."

"My gracious! What are they worth?"

"Twenty thousand dollars."

"And you found them in the street! What are you going to do with them?"

"Find their owner, of course, and return them."

Tom then recounted to his chum how he had come by the package which contained the bonds.

"You had a strenuous time of it trying to overtake that carriage. How do you expect to find the owner of the bonds?"

"I expect they will be advertised for at once."

"You ought to get a reward for returning them."

"If any is offered I shan't refuse it. We need the money in our business."

"He'd be a pretty mean man that wouldn't give you something decent."

"What do you call decent?"

"Well, I should say that \$100 is the least you ought to expect."

"I'd be glad to get a hundred. It would come in mighty handy now."

"Would you really put as much as that into your Lusterine business?"

"Well, say, I'd slap a thousand in if I had it."

"A hundred would put us on our feet, I guess."

"It would help to keep things moving."

"I s'pose I'd better get around early to-morrow, as I've got some more of the polish to make."

"That's right."

"You haven't heard from the piano firm yet, have you?"

"No."

"Most time, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"I hope they send us an order."

"I hope so, too, for if we should get that company to use the Lusterine the chances are good for getting more piano manufacturers in line. That would give you more business than you could handle alone, Sam. I'd have to hire an assistant for you."

"But if you had to give them all credit for thirty, sixty or ninety days, as you say is the custom, besides selling the stuff to them at a reduced rate, on account of their taking a quantity, why, I don't see how——"

"Don't worry. We shall probably have a few dollars in the treasury by the time we get such a rush of trade as that."

"Well, good night. I'll see you in the morning."

Sam departed, while Tom shut up shop and went into the house.

"Your pa has gone to see your ma," said the maid, meeting him in the hall.

"Oh, he has. He didn't say anything to me about going."

"He came home about two, dressed himself and said he was in a hurry to catch the three o'clock train. There are three letters for you in the dining-room."

Tom rushed down to get them.

Two were from Dundee dealers who wanted a supply of the Lusterine to put on regular sale.

The third, to Tom's intense delight, was from the manager of the Dundee Piano Company.

Mr. Smith said that the Invincible Lusterine had proved to be eminently satisfactory, and that he wished to see Mr. Thomas Sherwood as soon as possible with a view of making a contract for a year's supply of the polish.

CHAPTER XI.

MR. HANFORD ADVISES TOM.

"Business is beginning to boom," grinned Tom, who was now feeling like a bird. "A year's supply! I suppose I'll have to do some figuring. Mr. Smith will want rock-bottom figures. Well, seeing that he can't get the Lusterine nor its equal anywhere but from us, I think I can afford to demand a decent price. At any rate, I don't mean to give it away just for the sake of securing a big order. We're out for the dough just the same as Mr. Smith is."

As his father was away, Tom of course couldn't consult him about the bonds he had found, so he decided to go around and see Mr. Hanford.

He found that gentleman at home.

"I'm glad to see you, Mr. Sherwood," he said, when Tom was shown into the sitting-room upstairs, where he also found Olive and her mother.

Mrs. Hanford and her daughter expressed the pleasure they felt at seeing the boy again.

"I came especially to see you about a package of United States Government bonds I picked up on the street to-day," said Tom to the banker.

"Indeed," replied Mr. Hanford in surprise.

"Here they are, sir," continued the boy, producing the package and taking out the bonds. "There are twenty of them of the denomination of \$1,000 each. There was not the slightest clue to their owner on the package. I wish you'd advise me how I had best proceed in order to restore them to the right party."

Mr. Hanford looked the bonds over.

"I see these are 4's of 1925, and are worth to-day \$1,320 each. The whole bunch represents a total, therefore, of \$26,400—a matter of some importance to the person who lost them. Tell me the circumstances of the case."

Tom immediately explained how they came into his possession.

"Well, leave the bonds with me and I will take measures to discover the person who lost them."

"All right, sir. I am glad to get them off my hands, as I am pretty busy at present."

"Busy!" exclaimed the banker, regarding his young visitor inquisitively, while Mrs. Hanford and Olive both looked at Tom in some surprise. "Why, this is your vacation time. I suppose," he added with a smile, "you are busy having a good time."

"Well, sir," grinned Tom, "if you call trying to build a business up for yourself having a good time you're right."

"Trying to build a business up for yourself! I don't quite catch your meaning, I'm afraid. You are not yet through with your schooling. I heard that you were going to the Dunwoodie Academy this fall."

"My father intends to send me there, but I'm not sure that I shall go."

"Why not?"

"Because I am satisfied in a business project that I am determined to put through."

Mr. Hanford did not seem to regard this explanation very favorably.

"You are young to think of embarking in business," he said. "What is this business, and what put the idea into your head?"

Tom saw that he would have to make a full statement of his Lusterine plans if he expected to satisfy the banker's doubts regarding the propriety of his present undertaking.

He was also afraid he might lose Olive's good opinion unless he could set himself right with her, too.

So he began at the beginning and told how he had accidentally discovered the secret of making a wood polish that had proved to be superior to anything before the public; how he had determined to introduce it on the market, and what he had already done toward that end, with his success up to that moment.

His auditors listened to his story with a great deal of interest.

"You certainly have great ambition to get on in the world, and plenty of push and energy to back it up," said Mr. Hanford when Tom had concluded. "You haven't let any grass grow under your feet in this matter, that's plain to be seen. I should like to see some of the results of your remarkable polish. It must be something above the ordinary to interest the manager of the Dundee Piano Works. Still I cannot say that I approve of you making a business of this thing yet. You should finish your education before you turn your thoughts seriously to business. I would suggest that you lease your discovery to some big firm that manufactures polish, and let them pay you a royalty on their sales. That would relieve you of all the trouble and embarrassment of building up a new business at a time of life when you ought to be at school, and doubtless would in time secure to you a considerable income."

This was wise and well-meant advice on the banker's part, but Tom was too enthusiastic over his Lusterine to enthuse along those lines.

His heart and soul was wrapped up in pushing the business of manufacturing and selling his Invincible Lusterine to a successful conclusion, and, boy-like, he chafed at the idea of allowing others to do that interesting thing for him.

Politeness, however, induced him to thank Mr. Hanford for his suggestions, and to say that he would think the matter over.

In reality, though, he had not the slightest intention of reconsidering the line of action he had marked out for himself.

He did not believe in dividing his profits with strangers,

at least not as long as he and Sam could control the situation.

He spent the evening with the Hanfords, particularly in Olive's society, who played and sang in a charming manner for his entertainment.

"Mamma and I will leave town in a week for the Cat-skills," she said, when she had accompanied him to the front door. "Auntie is going with us, too. I hope you will call specially on me before we go. Now will you?"

Of course Tom promised that he would call.

He couldn't think of refusing such a charming girl, in whom he was already beginning to take a strong interest.

Next morning he invested all the capital in the treasury in additional raw material for Sam to transform into Lusterine.

When his chum appeared he showed him the letter he had received from the manager of the piano works.

Sam, of course, was tickled to death.

"You're going down there to-day, I suppose?" he said.

"Sure thing—this morning."

"How much do you think they'll use in a year?"

"I couldn't tell you. Mr. Smith will tell me about how many gallons when I see him. I'm going to charge a price that'll allow us a decent profit."

"Do you think I'll be able to make it fast enough to supply them?"

"Sure you will, if you work steadily, and more, too. Besides, it'll be easy to get another gas stove and another copper kettle. Then you'll be able to turn out twice as much."

"We'll have to have some gallon and half-gallon tins made for us, and probably some larger bottles. We'll need larger labels and lots of things as our trade increases."

"You can bet we will. However, we ought to pull out, as we're under no expense at present except for the bottles and raw materials."

An hour later Tom took a train which stopped at Dundee, and by half-past ten he was in Mr. Smith's private office figuring on a year's supply of his Lusterine for the piano factory, so much to be furnished on the first of every month.

Tom finally arranged to quote him a spot cash figure, express prepaid to the factory, and entered into an agreement to guarantee delivery of the stuff each month.

He then made the round of all the furniture houses he had canvassed on his first visit to the town and took orders for a dozen or a half-dozen bottles from a number of them.

He also found time to look the situation up in Unionville and secured two small orders in that town.

He could do nothing more that day and returned to Englewood by the four o'clock train.

CHAPTER XII.

TOM COMES INTO \$1,000.

A note was awaiting Tom at his house from Mr. Hanford.

The banker said that the owner of the bonds had been found and the securities retored to him.

He had advertised for them in the morning's paper, offering \$1,000 reward for their return to his home.

He had given Mr. Hanford his check for that amount, and the banker was ready to pay the money over in cash to Tom.

"One thousand dollars!" exclaimed the boy, hardly believing the evidence of his eyes. "Great Cæsar! Can it actually be true that I'm to get one thousand dollars?"

He read the note over again.

"Yes, there it was down in black and white in the banker's own handwriting—one thousand dollars.

Tom let out a whoop that startled the maid servant, who was setting the table for the boy's supper, he being the only member of the family at home.

"What's the matter, Master Tom?" she asked, with a giggle. "Are you often taken that way?"

"Not often, Minnie; but I guess you'd feel like letting off steam if somebody was to suddenly make you a present of a thousand dollars."

"Lands sake! Has somebody died and left you that much?" she asked.

"No, Minnie; but I found a package worth \$26,000 yesterday, and the gentleman was so glad to get it back that he left \$1,000 as a present for me with a friend of mine."

"My goodness! You're a rich boy, aren't you?"

"Oh, a thousand dollars isn't so much."

"It's a lot of money for a boy like you to have. I suppose you'll put it in the savings bank. I wish I had a thousand dollars."

"Save your money, Minnie, and you'll have a thousand by the time you get married."

The girl giggled again and resumed her work, while Tom rushed to the carriage house to show the note to Sam, who hadn't gone home yet.

For the next ten minutes there was high jinks in the workroom.

"That money will help us put the Lusterine on its feet," said Tom.

Then he told Sam about the contract he had closed with the manager of the piano factory.

"It's cash, too. No waiting thirty, sixty or ninety days, but spot cash on delivery of the goods."

"Glory hallelujah!" shouted Sam.

"To-morrow I shall buy a new gas stove and another kettle; also a good supply of raw material, order more printing and pay all our debts. I'll have to get a day book, a cash book and a ledger. I must move my desk in here, too. I'll open an account at the Bee Hive Savings Bank."

"I think Steve Porter would have a fit if he knew we were getting on so fine."

"I guess he would. He hates me like fun," said Tom.

"He won't make anything out of that fake preparation he's got. The only store that has it on sale is his uncle's."

"And I'll bet his uncle will be after mine as soon as he hears about it."

The two boys then began to build a few castles in the air upon the future of Sherwood's Invincible Lusterine.

Next morning Tom called at the First National Bank and was shown into the president's private room.

His interview with Mr. Hanford was brief, and when he came out he had ten crisp \$100 bills in his pocket.

He went at once to the Bee Hive Savings Bank and deposited nine of them, retaining one for his present expenses in connection with his polish.

He laid in a fresh stock of bottles, which he obtained at the Englewood Glass Works.

They were a part of a lot of rejected bottles which had been left on the company's hands, and which Tom got cheap in lots to suit himself.

He spoke for the whole number on this occasion, about ten gross, or 1,440 bottles.

He had one gross delivered at once to hold the Lusterine Tom had made the previous day.

Then he purchased a small job lot of one-gallon tin cans and had them sent to his house.

He ordered large labels to fit them, also an additional supply of show cards to take away on his next trip, and paid the printer what he owed him.

That day Sam made more than enough Lusterine to fill the first month's order of the piano works.

He put it up in the gallon cans, and Tom only waited for the new labels and wrappers to have it ready for shipment.

A second gas stove was introduced into the shop, as Sam called it, and a second copper kettle procured for it, thus doubling the productive capacity of the fire.

Tom then started out for the city of Buffalo, with his grip loaded with sample bottle of the Lusterine.

He was gone two days on this trip, and when he got back home his father wanted to know where he had been and what Sam Wiley was so busy about in the carriage house during his absence.

"Oh, Sam and I are running a little business scheme, that's all," replied Tom. "I've invented a new furniture polish and have taken Sam into partnership. He makes the stuff and I drum up trade for it."

"So this is the way you are amusing yourselves during your vacation, is it?" replied his father, sarcastically. "What is the name of this great polish, if I may ask?"

"Sherwood's Invincible Lusterine."

"Have you sold any yet?" grinned his father.

"Yes, sir. I have a contract for a year's supply with the Dundee Piano Works. That isn't so bad for a starter."

"You have what?" almost gasped Mr. Sherwood, looking hard at his son.

Tom repeated his statement.

"Show me your copy of the contract."

"Certainly, sir," replied the boy, going up to his room and bringing the document back with him.

Practically it was merely an agreement on the part of

the piano firm to take so many quarts of "Sherwood's Invincible Lusterine" per month for the space of one year, at a specified price per quart, payable C. O. D., as a regular contract with a minor was not binding in law.

It was signed by the manager.

"Pray, young man, who is going to carry out this agreement after you go to the Dunwoodie Academy—your friend, Sam Wiley?"

This was a question Tom didn't want to answer, but his father's eyes were on him and he couldn't wriggle out of it.

"Well, sir," replied the boy, diplomatically, "that is a question to be considered when the time comes."

"It's my opinion you'll get tired of this tomfool business long before your vacation is over," said Mr. Sherwood, dismissing the subject, much to his son's relief.

"If he knew how far I was in the business up to this date it would rather astonish him," thought Tom, as he carried his memorandum of agreement back to his room.

CHAPTER XIII.

A MIDNIGHT CAPTURE.

"Well," said Sam Wiley, when he showed up promptly at eight o'clock next morning, "what sort of luck did you have in Buffalo?"

"Oh, pretty good. I managed to interest a dozen houses in the Lusterine. I left samples with them to try. In case they decide to put it on sale I'll hear from them shortly. I sold six bottles to the hotel I stopped at for the full retail price. That reduced my bill."

"I've kept right at the manufacturing end, and have got all those gallon cans you see under the bench filled and labelled. I sent off the Dundee Piano Works's first order, and there's the express company's receipt," said Sam, pointing to a hook near Tom's desk.

"You've been doing well, Sam. I've got an order in the mail from Unionville and two from Pomona. I've also got a post card from the Englewood Furniture Manufacturing Company. The head of the house wants to see me. I wouldn't be surprised but we'll get a large order from them. They make a big line of desks and other office furniture."

"I guess they could use more than the Dundee firm, don't you think?"

"Sure thing."

"We're doing fine for the short time we've been in business."

"That's because we're putting out an article that has real merit."

"By the way, I forgot to tell you that Steve Porter and Danny Mack were hanging around outside your fence for an hour yesterday afternoon."

"They were, eh?"

"Yes. I saw Porter point twice to the carriage house."

"They're up to some trick. We must be on our guard."

Tom shipped off the orders he had on file and then walked up to the office of the Englewood Furniture Manufacturing Company.

He had an interview with the head of the firm, which resulted in a standing order for several cans of Lusterine per week, a statement to be rendered on the first of each month, payment to be made on the 10th.

That evening he visited Olive Hanford and had a first-class time.

She, her mother and aunt were going away next day.

He had intended to leave before ten, but time passed so quickly and enjoyably with the two young people that the clock actually struck eleven before he had made a move.

"My goodness!" he exclaimed. "I've overstepped the bounds, I'm afraid, Miss Olive. I had no idea it was so late."

"Oh, well, this is a special occasion, you know," laughed the girl. "You won't see me again for all of two months."

"May I write to you while you are away?" he asked, eagerly.

"Certainly you may if you care to."

"Will you answer my letters?"

"Of course I will; but I'm afraid they'll be so uninteresting that——"

"Your letters are sure to interest me," he interrupted hastily.

"How can you say that before you have seen one of them?" she said, with a smile.

"No matter; I'll take the chances."

It was a quarter past eleven before Tom finally tore himself away from the fair girl and started for home.

As he approached his front gate in the shade of the long line of trees which fringed both sides of the street he noticed a couple of figures slouching along ahead of him.

Whoever they were, they did not seem to be aware of his presence.

Their actions were so suspicious that Tom kept his eye on them.

"Geewilikens! If they haven't entered our yard," he exclaimed suddenly.

He hastened his steps and admitted himself by the main gate.

Then he rushed lightly across the lawn toward the yard.

The two figures he had seen outside were now standing under the shadow of the carriage house looking up at Tom's workroom.

"Who are they, and what the deuce are they up to?" muttered the boy, who had halted under a convenient tree.

There was no moon, but it was a bright enough night for the actions of the intruders to be easily made out, although Tom did not immediately recognize them.

After consulting together the pair of interlopers started off around the carriage house and presently reappeared with the ladder, which they raised to one of the windows of Tom's sanctum.

"That settles it," breathed the watcher. "Their object

is to get into that room. It's time for me to take a hand in this game."

When he and Sam shut up for the night they had closed the windows as a precautionary measure.

Tom thought now that it was lucky they had done so, for entrance could not be effected that way unless the rascals broke a pane so they could get at the catch on the inside.

Only one of the fellows went up the ladder at first, but when he tried the window and found it secure he called his companion up to look at it.

The second chap struck a match to see what it was that held the window, and the flame lighted up their faces for a moment.

Tom recognized them as Steve Porter and Danny Mack.

"Well, if they haven't a nerve!" muttered Tom, angrily. "I've a great mind to let them get in and then have them arrested as burglars. They need a good lesson to teach them to keep away from this place."

Satisfied that the window could not be opened without forcing, they descended to the ground and moved the ladder to the other window.

"They won't have any better luck there," grinned Tom to himself.

As Steve and Danny went up the ladder again an idea occurred to Sherwood.

He crossed rapidly behind the unsuspecting young rascals, and rushing to the ladder, grabbed the lower rung and jerked it to one side.

The ladder toppled over and the upper end fell to the ground, carrying Steve and Danny with it.

Both yelled murder as they struck the ground, and before either could rise Tom was upon them.

Danny tried to make his escape, but Sherwood got hold of him by the collar, and throwing him down again straddled him.

Steve made no effort to get away, but lay groaning as if in great pain.

It happened that a policeman was passing down the street at the time and the racket attracted his notice.

He entered the yard and soon made out the scene of the trouble.

He had his night stick in his hand and was ready for business.

"What's going on here?" he asked, laying his hand on Tom's shoulder.

"These two chaps were trying to force an entrance into our carriage house," replied Tom. "You'd better take charge of them."

"What's your name?" asked the officer.

"Tom Sherwood. This is my home."

"Let that chap up. I'll take care of him."

Tom got off of Danny and the policeman yanked him to his feet.

"Let me go," expostulated Mack. "I ain't done nothing."

"What are you doing on these grounds at this time of the night?"

"Nothin'."

"You see that ladder on the ground, officer? Well, they brought it from behind the carriage house, where we keep it when it's not in use, and had it planted under one of those windows. They were both up there trying to see if they couldn't get into my workshop when I ran up, jerked the ladder aside and spilled them upon the ground. I'm afraid the other chap is hurt. I know them both. That is Danny Mack you've got hold of. The other is Steve Porter. If they will promise to keep away in future I'm willing you should let them go."

"I don't know about that," replied the policeman. "This is a serious piece of business they have been engaged in. They'll have to give an explanation at the station. Come, young fellow," to Porter, "get up or I'll tickle you with my stick."

"Oh, I can't," groaned Steve. "I believe my arm is broken."

"Serves you right if it is. You're pretty young to be engaged in crooked work."

"Oh, oh, oh!" whimpered Porter.

Tom struck a match, and by its light he saw that Steve was as pale as a sheet, and his moans showed that he had suffered some injury.

"Maybe his arm is broken," said Sherwood. "What shall we do with him? There is a doctor in the house across the street. We'd better take him there, hadn't we?"

"Hold this chap while I look at that fellow," said the officer.

Danny tried to take advantage of the situation to break away from Tom, but he was not successful.

"I'll get even with you if you don't let me go," he said vindictively.

"If you talk in that strain I'll put you through," replied Tom, disgustedly.

"You can't prove nothin' ag'in us," retorted Danny, defiantly.

"You meant to break into my workshop."

"We didn't mean no such thing."

"Why did you come here, then?"

"None of your business."

"All right. Perhaps you'll find out that it is my business to protect my own property."

In the meantime the policeman had been investigating the injury suffered by Steve Porter, and while he was doing it Steve fainted dead away from the pain.

"His arm does seem to be broken," said the officer. "I'll carry him across the street. If the other chap gives you any trouble I'll give him a rap with my club."

That threat cowed Danny Mack, and he allowed Tom to lead him along after the officer and his burden.

The policeman roused the doctor up and he came downstairs to look at the patient.

His verdict settled all doubt on the subject—Steve's arm was broken.

The injured boy was carried into the physician's dining-room, where his arm was set and bandaged up before he regained consciousness.

"I don't care to prosecute these fellows," said Tom to the policeman.

"You have no right to refuse to do so," was the reply. "It will make trouble for you."

"I think you'd better call it off," suggested Sherwood. "Porter is punished enough, for he'll be laid up for awhile and have a chance to repent. As for Mack, I think the scare he's had ought to prove a lesson for him. I don't like to send them to jail. It might ruin their future."

The officer finally agreed to fall in with Tom's view, and after giving Danny a serious call-down he allowed him to go.

As for Steve the doctor said he'd better remain at his house till morning.

Tom then went home and the policeman continued on his beat.

CHAPTER XIV.

MR. SHERWOOD PUTS IN HIS OAR.

"Now, Sam," said Tom a week later, "we've got a reasonably good supply of the Lusterine made up, and as we have received several orders from Buffalo I'm going on a longer trip this time."

"Where are you going?"

"I'm going to put another day in at Buffalo, then I'm going on to Dunkirk, from there to Erie, then to Painesville, Ohio, where there's a furniture factory on a large scale, thence to Cleveland, Sandusky and Toledo. From the latter place I shall head direct to Chicago, where I expect to put in a week."

"Gee! Going to do things up brown, aren't you?"

"I'm bent on getting this business in good running shape before the end of our vacation, so that if my father insists on me giving it up I'll move my duds and our factory somewhere else and let him kick all by himself. He has neglected me too long for me to allow him to put his oar in against my interests now."

"But he's your natural guardian, and has the law with him."

"I don't care if he is. If he'd been more of a father to me I should look at matters in a different light. I'd take him into my confidence, let him supervise this business while I was at school so it would be in good shape when I came to take hold of it permanently. But as things are I don't care to be under any obligations to him, even if he offered to see me through, which I know he wouldn't. My step-mother would chip in anyway the moment she saw there was a good prospect of my getting ahead of Henry. I've been treated as a side-issue too long. Now I'm going to assert myself at any cost. I'll turn this business over to you to run before I'll let my father break it up, and

then I'd keep out on the road where he couldn't reach me. I can trust you, Sam; that's why I took you in with me."

Tom packed his grip with such clothes and other things as he was likely to need during his trip, and in the second-hand suit case he stowed as many sample bottles of his Lusterine as he could conveniently carry.

"I've enough in the case to last me through Erie, I guess," he said to Sam. "You must send me four dozen bottles by express to Cleveland; two dozens to Sandusky, and three dozen to Toledo. I'll call for the packages at the express offices. Then I will want a much larger quantity sent on to Chicago—say eight dozen bottles and a dozen of the gallon cans. I will write you when to forward them."

"What'll I tell your father when he asks where you are?"

"I'm going to leave a note for him, in which, however, I shan't specify my route. He won't say anything to you."

"He might insist on closing up this place. What then?"

"In that case hire a room somewhere suitable for the business and remove all our paraphernalia and stock in trade. Then arrange with the postoffice to have the carrier deliver our mail to the new address. I'm going to leave you \$100."

"All right," replied his partner.

That afternoon Tom started for Buffalo.

When Mr. Sherwood got home and read the note his son had left for him he was very angry.

He went out to the carriage house and interviewed Sam Wiley.

He was rather surprised at the business air of the room, for he had never been up there since Tom had taken possession of the premises.

"I don't approve of this sort of business at all," he began, as he noted the rows of labeled bottles, the cases of empties, the labeled cans, the two gas stoves, the copper kettles and all the other things connected with the manufacture of the Invincible Lusterine. "You boys ought to be enjoying yourselves during your vacation days instead of working as if you were grown men."

"We enjoy this work because we're building up a business for ourselves," said Sam, respectfully.

"Building up a business," sniffed Mr. Sherwood, rather scornfully. "Poppycock! When my son is through with his schooling I will see that he gets a clerkship in a suitable business."

"I should think you'd prefer him to have a business of his own, instead of having him work for somebody else," replied Sam.

"A business of his own," snorted Mr. Sherwood. "How could a boy of his age conduct any business successfully?"

"He seems to be conducting this Lusterine business in fine shape. Why, we——"

"Lusterine humbug!" exclaimed Mr. Sherwood. "He's only making a fool of himself. When he comes back tomorrow, or next day, I shall insist that he give this ridicu-

lous nonsense up. He can turn it over to you, if you have the time and inclination to carry it on; but you will have to remove these things elsewhere. I can't have my carriage house lumbered up with them."

"I'm afraid I wouldn't be able to carry this business on, sir. I can manufacture the Lusterine all right and attend to the shipping of the stuff, but as to introducing it on the market I'm not smart enough for that. Tom knows just how to do it. We've only been running this thing three weeks and he has got a good bit of trade already. He's drummed this town up and we've got a standing order from the Englewood Furniture Manufacturing Company. We've a year's contract with the Dundee Piano Works. We've got orders from Unionville, Tuckersville and Pomona, besides several orders, with prospects of many more, from Buffalo."

"One would imagine my son intended to make a permanent thing of this Lusterine business," replied Mr. Sherwood, sarcastically.

"That's his intention."

"It is, hey? Well, I won't have it. I'm his father, and he'll do as I say, I guess. He's going to the Dunwoodie Academy this fall, and after that I will select the business he is to follow."

"Were you thinking of having him go into your hardware business?"

"No, I was not," snapped Mr. Sherwood. "Henry will learn my business and eventually become my partner."

"But Tom is your eldest son."

"I will provide for him in a suitable manner in my will."

"Since you don't intend to give him an interest in your business, why don't you let him build this business up for himself?"

"Because I don't choose to see him waste his time."

"You might give him a trial, at any rate. You don't know how smart he is. Why, I think he's got more push and energy in his little finger than some men have in their whole body."

Mr. Sherwood smiled incredulously.

"Tom is only an inexperienced boy," he said.

"If I had \$1,000 to bet I'd back Tom to win out in anything he undertook."

"Have you two made any money out of this Lusterine yet?" said Mr. Sherwood, abruptly.

"No, sir. We don't expect to make money until we get the business established."

"Well, let me tell you right now, Wiley, if there's any more establishing done it will have to be done by you or somebody other than my son. When he comes back from his idiotic trip he's got to quit. I shall take him to his mother in the mountains to pass the rest of his vacation. He shall go up with me on Saturday."

"He won't be home by Saturday, sir."

"He won't, eh? Where has he gone?"

"He went to Buffalo this afternoon."

"How long did he intend to stay there?"

"Not over a day, I think."

"Then he should be home day after to-morrow."

"He's not coming back here, sir, till he's canvassed the furniture houses of Chicago."

"Chicago!" roared Mr. Sherwood. "I'll put a stop to this thing at once. I'll telegraph him to come home directly. What hotel is he to stop at?"

"The Lake House, sir."

Mr. Sherwood wrote it down.

"In the meantime you'd better remove all this stuff somewhere else," he said to Sam.

"Do you mean that, sir?"

"I certainly do."

"Very well, sir. I'll look up another place and have everything carted away."

Satisfied that he had accomplished his point, Mr. Sherwood retired to his house, and after dinner he sent a peremptory telegram to Tom to return home at once.

CHAPTER XV.

ON THE ROAD.

Tom, however, did not receive his father's telegram.

After arriving at Buffalo he put up at the Sheldon Hotel instead of the Lake House, as he had originally intended, and in the morning he started out to go over his previous route in order to see what success his Lusterine was having.

After calling at half a dozen places and picking up a couple of orders, he entered one large establishment on Blank street, where the head of the firm had expressed a very favorable opinion of his polish from the samples he had shown on his first trip.

He was admitted to the private office after a short delay.

"We have given your polish a practical test," said the head partner, "and we are satisfied it is just what we want. Our factory, however, is at Cincinnati, and it will be necessary for you to go there and see our superintendent. Can you do that?"

"Yes, sir, if I am sure of getting an order that will warrant it."

"I can guarantee that you will get a large order if you do not figure too high. I will give you a letter to deliver personally to Mr. Green, our superintendent."

The letter was written and handed to Tom, who then visited a few other furniture houses, and after dinner took a train for Cincinnati direct.

Before he left, however, he wrote a letter to Sam telling of the change in his arrangements, and that he would probably remain three days in Cincinnati and then go on to Chicago, afterwards taking in the other towns in the reverse order.

Sam got his letter Friday afternoon and immediately

answered it, directing his letter to the Gault House in Cincinnati.

He told Tom the substance of the interview between him and Mr. Sherwood, and said that in accordance with that gentleman's orders he had removed all their business property to a big room in a factory building on Essex street, where he had hung out a sign which read as follows:

Office of
Sherwood's Invincible Lusterine,
The Finest Wood Polish in the World.
Sherwood & Wiley, Sole Mfrs.

In a postscript he added that Mr. Sherwood had been suddenly called to New York on business, but had left word at the house that his son was to go to the mountains as soon as he returned to Englewood.

"I see myself going to the mountains this summer," said Tom to himself when he read his partner's letter two days afterward in the Gault House. "There's no use of my returning to Englewood now to have a row with my father. I'll stay right out on the road and let Tom attend to all the details of the business at our new office. I'm glad we're away from the house. It was only a question of a short time when we would have had to move anyway, as this business is growing every minute. I'm not going to let my father spoil the Lusterine prospects if I can help it. This is the chance of my life. Henry can have father's business for all I care. I can take care of myself and make my way in the world. I'm going to get at the top of the ladder by my own exertions alone."

Tom could afford to talk big, for he had just closed arrangements with the Cincinnati manufactory of the Buffalo house for a big and steady supply of the Lusterine which would turn the firm of Sherwood & Wiley in a good profit.

He was now canvassing the furniture houses of the city with the view of getting his polish on the retail market.

The success which had already attended his efforts elsewhere had stiffened his back, and he talked up the merits of his Lusterine like a Dutch uncle.

His earnest manner carried conviction with it, and his samples clinched the business, so that he soon found that his polish was going like hot cakes in the Queen City of the Middle West.

He had to send a telegram to Sam to send a gross of bottles by express at once.

Before he left Cincinnati he sold six gross altogether for immediate delivery, C. O. D., for which the firm in due course received checks amounting to \$129.60.

Instead of going to Chicago Tom went to Louisville, Ky., where he did a proportionately satisfactory business.

In the meantime Sam saw that the ten gross of bottles Tom had engaged at the Englewood Glass Works would soon be exhausted at the rate orders were coming in, so he telegraphed that fact to his partner and received in-

structions to order a special bottle made, in twelve gross lots, with the word "Lusterine" blown in it.

Tom also wrote him to place an order for a gross of gallon cans from a Pomona firm, and to have the name of the polish stamped in the tin.

From Louisville Tom went to Evansville in Indiana, on the Ohio River, thence to Vincennes, on the Wabash River, then straight across Illinois to St. Louis, Missouri.

He put in a week in St. Louis, including a trip up the Missouri River to Hannibal.

From that point he came east as far as Springfield, the capital of Illinois, whence he took a train for Chicago.

He spent another week in Chicago and sold over 1,000 bottles of the Lusterine, as well as six dozen cans of the polish.

At intervals he received letters from Sam telling of rush orders received from the various places he had been, and of the money orders and checks he was every day in receipt of, showing that Lusterine was booming.

Sam said that he was obliged to hire an assistant, a boy about his own age, as he could not personally attend to everything.

Tom also learned that his father was still in New York.

It was now the middle of August and Tom had been away from Englewood a whole month.

However, he was doing so well on the road, and he was so pleased with his success, that he decided to keep away, since Sam was managing the business in Englewood in great shape.

To say the truth, Tom was not at all anxious to meet his father.

He knew such a meeting would only be attended by unpleasant results.

So when he left Chicago he headed for Indianapolis, which is in the center of the State of Indiana.

He sold 500 bottles of Lusterine here subject to immediate delivery.

Then he went to Brentwood, a neighboring town, and made a contract with another piano house for regular monthly consignments.

Then he went to Dayton, Springfield and Columbus, Ohio, selling over 1,500 bottles in these cities.

Thence he went to Toledo, Sandusky and Cleveland.

In all these cities he boomed his polish to great advantage.

As he was about to start for Erie he received a dispatch from Sam calling him to Englewood at once.

CHAPTER XVI.

BUSINESS SUCCESS.

"I wonder what's up now," mused Tom as he read the brief telegram a second time. "Something out of the ordinary surely. Well, there's nothing for me to do but hot-foot it for my native burgh."

He bought a ticket for Englewood and boarded the Lake Shore Eastern Express.

Sam was at the depot waiting for him.

"Say, old man, what's the trouble?" Tom asked as soon as his partner came up.

"Sorry to say it's bad news," replied Sam, soberly.

"Bad news!" gasped Tom. "What do you mean?"

"Your father has had a stroke of paralysis, and it's uncertain whether he'll recover or not."

That was bad news indeed, for in spite of the indifference his father had always shown toward him, Tom loved his parent very much in the depths of his heart.

The tears sprang to his eyes as he said:

"That's tough, Sam. I must hurry to the house at once."

Minnie, the maid, admitted him.

She looked very solemn as befitted the circumstances.

"How is my father?" he asked her.

"He is very sick indeed, Master Tom," replied the girl.

The boy hurried upstairs and came face to face with his step-mother, who had just left her husband's bedside.

"My father—can I see him?" asked Tom, eagerly.

"He is very low," she answered in an agitated voice. "I doubt if he will recognize you. However, you may go in and see him."

A trained nurse was in attendance on the sick man.

He approached the bed, but the nurse held up a warning hand and he stopped.

"He is dozing," she whispered.

"Will he recover?" the boy asked.

"It is impossible to say at this moment, as he has had a very severe attack; but as it is his first stroke there is a chance that he may pull through."

Tom watched his father for some time.

It was a sad sight to see that strong man so suddenly cut down, as it were, in the prime of life, without having had an hour's sickness for years.

But such is life—the angel of death comes like a thief in the night, and it is the unexpected which always happens.

However, Mr. Sherwood rallied next day, and then grew slowly better.

Finally the doctor said that he was out of immediate danger.

But it was soon apparent that he never would be the same man again.

As soon as he was able to get about a bit his physician ordered him to be sent to a well-known sanitarium to recuperate.

Accordingly arrangements were made to that effect, and it was expected he would remain there three months or longer.

After he had gone Tom's step-mother broached the subject of the Dunwoodie Academy, whereupon the boy told her that he had given up the idea of attending the school, as he had gone into business on his own account that sum-

mer, and it was panning out so well that he couldn't think of giving it up.

Mrs. Sherwood did not press the matter, nor did she exhibit more than a languid interest in her step-son's affairs.

She simply allowed the matter to rest until her husband came back from the sanitarium.

Business was now pouring in on the firm of Sherwood & Wiley.

The two kettles which Sam and his assistant used continuously in the effort to keep up with the demand for the polish were entirely inadequate to meet the orders, so Tom added a special furnace and a large copper kettle to the firm's manufacturing department.

He also hired an adjoining room for a shipping and storage department, and employed a man to take full charge of it.

He also employed a young lady stenographer and book-keeper.

Then he went to the First National Bank and saw Mr. Hanford.

He asked whether, as a special favor, the bank would open an account with Sherwood & Wiley, notwithstanding the fact that both members of the firm were miners.

"We have so many checks sent to us from all parts of the country, and we expect these to increase as our business expands, that we are having a difficult time getting them cashed on the outside. In fact, it is almost a necessity for us to have a regular bank account."

"What have you been doing with your money?" asked Mr. Hanford, after Tom had told him how business was booming in Lusterine.

"Sam, my partner, has been depositing it in a saving's bank in his own name and then drawing it as he needed it."

"Well," replied the president of the First National, "it is against the rules of all commercial banks to receive accounts from minors, as they are not responsible, and a bank is liable at any time to suffer a loss through them. However, I think I can arrange the matter in this way: I will allow you to open an account and check against it, and will guarantee the bank against loss by becoming personally responsible for all your transactions. I do this out of regard for you, Mr. Sherwood, in consideration of the obligation I am under to you for saving my daughter's life. Although not without precedent, it is very rarely that a minor is ever permitted the privileges you have requested."

"I thank you very much, Mr. Hanford, for this favor, and assure you that you never will regret it. Some day this bank will be very glad that it numbers the firm of Sherwood & Wiley in its list of depositors."

Mr. Hanford laughed.

"According to that, you anticipate being a considerable factor in the commercial importance of this town."

"We certainly do, Mr. Hanford. I expect to see the

Invincible Lusterine as much talked about as Standard Oil before many years."

"The only way you can achieve that distinction is by spending a big fortune in advertising your polish."

"We shall do that in time," replied Tom, energetically. "One, however, must creep before he can walk and walk before he can run. When the firm of Sherwood & Wiley reaches the running stage you want to look out for surprises."

"You have a great deal of confidence in your future, it seems."

"I certainly have, and not without reason. We have the best polish in the world to-day, and that has been demonstrated by results. We have been in business scarcely three months, starting from absolutely nothing, and yet look at what we are already doing in the shipping line. I am going out on the road again on Monday. This time I shall take in New York City. I expect to get enough business there to make Sam's head swim."

"You are evidently a hustler, and I congratulate you on the success you are making with your Lusterine."

"Thank you, Mr. Hanford. I will bring my partner down this afternoon and introduce him to you. Your cashier will need his signature also in his book, as he will sign all checks when I'm out of town."

"I shall be glad to make Mr. Wiley's acquaintance," replied Mr. Hanford.

CHAPTER XVII.

CONCLUSION.

Tom's step-mother made no objection when he told her quietly and respectfully that he was going to New York on business connected with his Lusterine.

She showed no especial interest in his movements beyond asking how long he expected to be away.

"Two weeks or longer," he replied.

Henry, on the contrary, wanted to know all about his half-brother's trip.

"I wish I was going with you," he said eagerly. "You'll have a bang-up time, I suppose."

"I'm not going on a pleasure trip, Henry."

"That doesn't make any difference. You can't work all the time you're there. You'll see the city anyway. Go to the parks, the theatres, everywhere you want, for you'll be your own boss, and not tied to anybody's apron-string. It's a lucky thing for you that father's in the sanitarium."

"I wish you wouldn't talk that way, Henry."

"Why not? It's the truth, isn't it? He wouldn't let you go to New York on your own hook. You'd have to go to the academy and study, same as I have to do now at the High School."

"All right, Henry. Have it your own way."

"You'll have to give up your business any way when he comes home again."

"I don't think, so, Henry. I'll have it well established and be making good money by that time."

"Father intends you to become a clerk in Mr. Good-enough's store on Adams street. I heard him say so. I'm going to become a clerk in father's store, and some day I'll own the business, and then if you want to come and work for me I'll give you a chance."

"I am much obliged to you, Henry," smiled Tom. "If my Lusterine business ever goes up the spout I'll remember your offer."

"How much are you making now?" asked Henry, curiously.

"Not over \$1,000 a minute just now, but things will improve," grinned Tom.

"A thousand dollars a minute!" exclaimed Henry. "I guess you aren't making anything."

"I won't enter into a dispute above the matter," laughed Tom, who by this time had packed his grip and was ready to leave the house for a final conference with Sam before he went to the station to catch the express for the metropolis.

Tom reached New York that afternoon and went to the Murray Hill Hotel.

Although he had never been in the chief city of the United States before, he did not feel particularly strange, owing to his experiences in the big cities of the West.

He had purchased a pocket street map, same as he had done at Cincinnati, St. Louis and Chicago, and he devoted the evening to its study, and to short conversations with the hotel clerks and a couple of drummers from the South, who had been in New York before, and who kindly put him up to many wrinkles he would need to know.

Next morning he started out with his sample suitcase to do business.

He first gave his attention to the piano houses, which occupied a large share of his time during his first week.

He found his work cut out for him trying to convince the big piano manufacturers that there was no polish in the world that could hold a candle to Lusterine.

But no obstacles discouraged Tom Sherwood.

He was determined to push Lusterine to the front, and he went at the work with every bit of energy he had in him.

Richelieu is credited with the aphorism that in the "bright lexicon of youth there is no such word as fail," and Tom believed that the eminent French statesman knew what he was talking about when he gave utterance to those words.

After interesting the piano houses, he took up with the big furniture houses, and then visited the managers of the great department stores.

In tackling the latter Tom learned new points in the salesman's business—that it is not always the merit of an article that goes, but the way you can manage to persuade the buyers to put it in stock.

He discovered there were wheels within wheels, and that these wheels require to be properly greased to make them run the way you want them to.

He was smart enough to fall in with the situation, and

tumble to the fact that a wink is as good as a nod to a blind horse.

In plain English, he made it to the interest of the buyers to take hold of his Lusterine, for the advertisement he would get out of its introduction into the New York department stores was alone worth putting up a suitable cash consideration.

At the close of his second week's stay in New York the orders he sent on to Sam made his partner's eyes bulge with wonder, and compelled an addition to the firm's working force at Englewood.

Tom put in three weeks at the metropolis and then transferred his attention to Philadelphia, and from there to Baltimore.

He then returned to New York to chase up a few call-backs.

After that he returned home, having spent six weeks on the road.

He then planned a campaign into New England, with Boston as the center of operations, but before he started the firm of Sherwood & Wiley was compelled to move to much larger quarters and add extensively to their manufacturing and shipping departments.

The New England trip was also successful, Tom securing many piano houses to his already large list of steady customers.

Tom now began to employ canvassers and general agents to introduce Lusterine among the people.

The orders of the firm for twelve gross of bottles became so frequent that the Englewood Glass Works began to entertain a good deal of respect for the boy firm which had started out by purchasing a lot of cast-off bottles.

About this time a Sunday edition of the Englewood Times came out with a full page illustrated special article giving a history of the rise and unparalleled success of Sherwood's Invincible Lusterine.

What it didn't say in praise of this polish and the enterprising methods of its young inventor and his partner isn't worth mentioning.

Of course the public didn't dream that Tom had to write out a good-sized check to the order of the publishers of the Times before the article appeared in print, but he got his money out of it just the same.

From that moment Tom began new and unique methods of advertising his polish, as he felt he could afford the expense.

But money invested in judicious and consecutive advertising is never wasted.

When Mr. Sherwood returned from the sanitarium in January a comparatively well man, Tom was away on another prolonged Western trip.

Before he got back Sherwood pere discovered that the Invincible Lusterine was already one of the biggest and most promising industries in Englewood.

Tom now had little trouble in convincing him that the Dunwoodie Academy could get along very well without

him, but the future of Lusterine required his hand at the helm.

"You're an uncommonly smart boy, Thomas," remarked Mr. Sherwood, after he had gone over all the facts and figures in the case. "I'm beginning to think that my hardware business, which I have carried on so successfully for years in this town, will not be in it with your Lusterine in a year or so."

"Then, father, I understand that you withdraw all objection to my keeping on with this business?"

"Yes, it would be useless now for me to oppose you. The business speaks for itself, and there is no doubt in my mind but that you are the real power which has put it on a paying basis. I congratulate you, my son."

Tom was a happy boy after that momentous interview with his father.

He had been half afraid that he and his parent would come to an open rupture.

The clouds, however, had now dispersed from his home horizon, though his step-mother was undisguisedly jealous of his business success, since it promised to throw her favorite son, Henry, completely in the shade.

Tom had no more earnest well-wishers than the Hanford family, especially Olive, who was convinced that Tom was not only the bravest and manliest boy in Englewood, but also by far the smartest, and certainly if one was to judge by results achieved she was not far from being right.

To-day Sherwood's Invincible Lusterine is the staple polish on the market, and the firm and manufacturing establishment of Sherwood & Wiley are known from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from the Gulf of Mexico to the Great Lakes.

They have a bank account at the First National that goes well into five figures and the bank reaps considerable advantage from their custom.

Tom Sherwood is engaged to be married to Olive Hanford, and the wedding is a function of the near future to which the best society in Englewood is looking forward to with much eagerness, for it undoubtedly will be a swell affair.

Although the reputation of the Lusterine is now made, and it sells itself, Tom never neglects a chance to give it an additional boost, and to that end he is "Always on Deck."

THE END.

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